

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, March 18, 2024 AM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, Vice-Chair, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, Chair, District 2
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
MW—Mike Worden, Dispatch Center
NB—Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
DH—Dan Higbee, Building Department
TE—Tom Even, Okanogan Veterans Services Office
KB—Karen Beatty, Director, Okanogan County Central Services
PB—Paul Budrow, County Sheriff

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Nick Bates, newly hired Fairgrounds Manager, is surveying the buildings that need repair. Also, he would like to make changes to the rental fee schedule.
- Pete Palmer, Director of Planning, has hired a new Senior Planner and a Planner I to fill empty positions. She also hired another Planner I to replace an employee who will be leaving soon.
- Tom Even, Okanogan Veterans Services Officer gives his quarterly update to the Commissioners. They discuss housing for homeless veterans.
- Sheriff Budrow says he's received a grant to provide a Designated Crisis Responder who would work with deputies, fire fighters and EMS personnel in dealing with people in crisis. The hope is to be able to deal with such people without jailing them.

00:24—Pledge of Allegiance.

CB makes a note on zoom chat, saying that he's had a tooth pulled just this morning and he may not be talking as much as usual.

17:00—Public comment period. Emily Sisson uses the chat box to thank the commissioners for getting the clock moved. She also offers suggestions for improving a new version of the CGS video introduction to the county that the commissioners discussed last Monday.

Ms. Jackson uses the chat box to ask—I would like to know how Community Action Council is going to provide housing for the unhoused if there is no housing? I would like to know this data. I have talked with many unhoused and they are not getting help.... The people need to reach out more often to the

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unhoused ... I would like to say Thank you also for putting copies of the resolutions on the Consent Agenda.

22:20—JN—There are no more comments, so MW can start his discussion.

MW—I'm Mike Worden, Okanogan County Dispatch Center. Today's topic is the project to replace the old SAR (Search and Rescue) shop on the Railroad Ave. property.

AH—Thank you for taking on this project.

MW—You're welcome. It keeps my plate full. We're not going to get caught up unless we push against our limits. Where we are now is—we've resubmitted for a building permit. I'm waiting for a response from M.J. Neal to see what that does. Reopen the comment period? Is it a new application or an amendment to the old application?

CB—It's a new building configuration?

MW—Yes. It changes the footprint and placement of the building.

CB—That could mean a new permit has to be applied for.

MW—I asked MJ Neal but I haven't got an answer yet. Assuming it doesn't require a new permit and we're just moving forward with the old one, April 3 is when we're going to publish the small works for the demolition because it's anticipated to be under \$300,000.

Discussion with AH about bid requirements. If the whole project is above \$300,000 AH thinks it requires the full bidding process. He advises MW to discuss the situation with Josh (Thomson, Public Works) because he's way more versed in this stuff than AH is.

MW—I'll review the situation, but we hope to put out the bid on April 3 and have a site-walk on April 17. Bids will be due on April 24. Dates may have to be adjusted. We've done contract format review with the Prosecutor's Office. Questions?

AH—Glad you're pushing it forward.

JN—Different topic—You sent Emergency Management and all of us pictures of the command vehicle. Can I send the photos on to them because I don't think they got them?

MW—Sure. I also sent it to the Fire Chiefs' Assoc. and the EMS group—trying to get the word out and see if they'd like to get a tour to see if it'd be of value to them. I could bring it here for the BOCC to look at, too.

JN—At some point, that'd be good. And you'll have it at the Fair and local parades?

MW—Maybe not the parades. We can if you want.

JN—It'd be good for people to see where their tax dollars are spent.

MW—OK. That's all I've got.

31:40—NB—I'm Nick with the Fairgrounds. I've got a couple of things.

NB—First is a fee reduction application I'd like to give you. These people are Parents To Parents of Okanogan County (*a support group for parents of children with disabilities*), doing an Easter egg hunt at the south end of the RV Park. It's Okanogan Behavioral Healthcare. They've asked for a reduction or a waiver of the rental fee.

Commissioners read the application and fee waiver requirements then decide to waive the fee.

NB—I'll submit a proposal to change the rental rates. I looked at what we'd have to do to rent the arena or the track and saw that we'd be losing money big time. There are also some buildings on the rental list that aren't suitable to rent out.

NB—I also want to change the horse part of it. I don't think we want to board horses month-to-month. There's too much liability.

AH—Can you do it in word and do a red-line version so we can see the changes?

NB—Will do.

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AH—I didn't know we did monthly stall rentals.

NB—I don't think we want to be in the business of boarding horses. Emergencies are different.

AH—I don't think we were actually thinking about boarding. We were thinking about people with race horses. The Boots and Saddles Club paid money for the facilities for people bringing race horses to the fair. Also people who train horses.

NB—The rate schedule says it's just regular boarding for a month. I can clarify that on the rate schedule so it'll just apply to race horses at the fair.

AH asks CB and JN if they agree, and they do.

43:00—NB—I told the guys that winter is over so I've got them cleaning up around the barns, building, etc.

NB—I've been going through each of the building, taking notes. I'm going to be rating the buildings as yellow, green and red. I'll include descriptions of the problems and suggested solutions that could be done economically.

NB—A woman called me on Friday and said we're ready to start on the 27th about building the horse stalls. Apparently the previous manager had contacted her about putting up 20 new stalls. They wanted me to sign a bill for \$160,000 but I didn't have any paperwork or anything, so I didn't sign.

AH—The other thing is we all know the buildings need a lot of work. But we've already put in over \$1,000,000 in the arena, track railing, bleachers, etc. Moving forward, I like your comment about doing it economically.

NB—I'm looking at how to fix the building not with just a band-aid, but not tearing it down and rebuilding, either. Figure out what we can do ourselves and put a price to it.

NB—Another question. I received an email from Cari Hall, saying she needs copies of invoices for A-19 sent to the Department of Agriculture. She thinks prior fairgrounds staff was doing the billing for this.

LJ—I was working with Cari last week. It was for the Department of Ag grant. I think it was Naomie (Peasley, former Fairgrounds Manager) who had the A-19s.

AH—Ask Central Services if they can look in Naomie's emails to the D of A.

NB—OK. I'll ask them. NB leaves.

49:20—JN—Maurice, you're up.

MG—Good Morning. I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management. I don't have anything this morning. We have a meeting tomorrow at the Fairgrounds for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

JN—The Tonasket one went off fairly well?

MG—I think it did. We could have had a few more people there. There were about 25 to 30. Good representation from the agencies. Good discussion. Hoping we'll get more tomorrow. Are any of you coming? (No one replies.) OK. That's all I have.

50:30—JN—Dan(Higbee, Building Department)?

DH—The City of Brewster sent the building contract to me instead of to Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor). She asked that I bring it to Lanie. Esther originally sent it to them.

DH—Also, the WUI (Wildlands-Urban Interface) code did not get adopted by the state until the state can update the maps. They say that'll take a year or a year and a half and you know how that goes.

52:00—JN—Pete?

PP—Good morning. I'll be quick.

PP—We interview last week and filled our Senior Planner position and two Planner I positions. One was vacant and one is leaving April 5. I'm wondering if I can bring one of the Planner I people on two weeks early to shadow Elizabeth for her last two weeks so she'll know all about nightly rentals and everything.

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AH—That’s good. Two weeks is minimal.

PP—I’ve got a resolution with the BARS codes.

PP—I found out that nobody was really working on the contract for the Hearing Examiner, so I filled in some of the blanks myself and gave it to Esther. We’re hoping to have it to you by the end of the day.

We have him scheduled for March 28 and April 11 already. The hearings are about gravel pit things.

AH—I want to make sure the Hearings Examiner knows that he’s not just a rubber stamp for the County. He needs to know that we’ll support his decisions even when they go against the county. Our past Examiner did a good job of that.

PP—I’m hoping we’ll get him to do a zoom or come in person to talk to the staff and look at the staff reports and documents. Also hoping he can pop in here someday too to meet you guys.

JN—Thanks. PP leaves.

JN leaves to talk to PP for a minute.

AH confirms LJ’s schedule. She’s leaving at noon for the clerk’s conference in Yakima. Cam will take minutes on Tuesday.

CB—The housing presentation isn’t on the agenda. Do you know about it?

AH—No.

AH—Can they send us the power-point presentation?

Discussion of DocuSign vs. signing with ink on paper.

1:32:05—I’m Tom Even from the Okanogan Veterans Services Office. We’ve got some guests today—The Veterans Board, Community Action—the SSVF (Supportive Services for Veterans’ families) portion of it. We’re working with them to get outreach activities for homeless veterans in the county. None have been set up yet, but on April 25, we’re having a Veterans Resource Fair at their office in Omak. It includes VA ID cards, employment opportunities, veterans’ benefits, continuing education and local resources.

TE—Last week I was in our Twisp office and had six veterans come in. That’s a record and maybe I’ll start being in Twisp for a full day instead of just a half-day. Twisp outreach is doing really well.

TE—Last month, I went to Nespelem for a veterans’ open house. It’s a resource fair like we’ll be having in April. I picked up five new veterans to add to our system. A couple came for health care and a few more for claims. Vince McDonald, who’s in charge for the veterans’ program in Nespelem said his staff will receive its accreditation this month, but he’s said that before.

TE—The PACT Act (a law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances) has been at the forefront this year. We’ve had a lot of phone calls, asking questions and making claims. A lot of claims under Agent Orange that were denied are being appealed through the PACT Act and being reapplied for again. We’re getting a lot of claims.

TE—There are a couple of job fairs coming up. March 21 in Wenatchee. Also the 18th in Nespelem. I’ll probably go to the one in Nespelem.

TE—Jim has finished his TRIP (Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims) training. Now he’s in the process of getting the paperwork done for his stakeholders’ credentials. I’ve got a chart showing the assistance provided—average number of calls per day, assistance with paper work, etc. The VA outsources to private doctors to process their disability claims. We’ve had numerous people call this month and tell us about this.

TE—Anybody else have anything?

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Dale—I do. (*Note taker does not know Dale's last name or his position.*) I've got information about Resort Vacations discount, mental health, VA boot camp, etc. Also there's a press release about the VA's plans to help end veterans' homelessness.

Dale—The VA will award \$52,500,000 to local organization to prevent veterans' suicides. I don't know if there are local organizations applying for this money.

AH—Community Action could apply for the homeless money. The OBHC (Okanogan Behavioral Healthcare) could help address the mental health issues that are associated with suicide.

Discussion about who could apply for this money.

Discussion about the PACT Act and bringing in outside doctors to decides on a "more likely than not" basis that the illness occurred in a Viet Nam or Afghanistan, etc. It also looks at places where Agent Orange was stored outside of war zones—such as the Philippines and the US. People who were exposed outside of the war zones are now eligible for benefits.

Dean—We need to make sure the county gets its fair share of the money that's available. Whoever goes after this money needs to figure out how to build a bunch on mini-homes. There's all this money and I don't see anyone applying for it.

Dean—We also need to improve care—using new therapies like peyote—but we need more studies on it.

Dean—I also found information about resort vacation discounts. Using "space available" discounts. I've worked with veterans for 30 years. Working with Disabled Veterans and the VFW. Discussion of problems faced by veterans with many issues.

AH—How do we know how many homeless veterans we have?

?—We use SSVF mostly. But we only know about the people we see. Try to share information with other teams.

AH—There are lots of housing projects going on in the county dealing with homeless based on income levels. Community Action is good at dealing with that. But we'd need good data for homelessness for veterans.

?—Community Action and SSVF do a good job with the data and it's their work to get the grants. We trust their data and hope we can share information with them.

Dale talks about different definitions for homelessness—couch surfer, living in the shell of a trailer without any water, etc.

CB—I'm engaged with the discussion of housing with Community Action. Wrap around services providing support services like crisis services. And a lot of times the community doesn't want to accept the kind of housing being make available. I agree we need to be taking notice of this.

2:05:00—AH—

AH—JN has to go to the Canvas Board meeting. We have a public hearing scheduled for this time, but we could talk more afterwards.

?—We once had a man come in who was about to be evicted. He had no money but he'd never applied for his pension. We helped him apply and the pension money saved his house.

Veterans people leave.

AH—OK It's 11:00 and we've got a public hearing about a revision of Okanogan County Code 2.84, dealing with the expansion of the Security Committee.

No comments.

CB—I move to approve Ordinance 2024-2 to change the membership of the Security Committee to include a representative for all county departments. Motion passes 2-0.

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2:09:30—KB—I’ve been looking at what we need to set up Hearing Examiner’s room for teleconferencing . We need an 85”screen and a dedicated computer, among other stuff.

AH—We should have video conferencing equipment for every department.

KB—We would need a license from Microsoft for every room we equip. That’s not in the budget.

AH—We can handle that.

KB—Also I got a quote for \$47,000 per courtroom for upgrades. There are two more quotes to come.

AH—When you get them, get some time on the agenda so we can talk about them.

KB—Will do. KB leaves.

2:15:15—AH to CB—Is it just the commissioners discussing the RFQ (Request for qualifications) for the fairgrounds water system?

CB—Yes. I had it published and I got responses—from Rell (?) and Associates and Aspect. Rell wanted for information. I sent them the study that was done because that’s the best description of the system that we’ve got.

AH—The study was about cross-connections and we need to make sure the potable water stays potable in the final system. But we also need to be sure we’ve got enough water.

CB—I’m looking at Board of Health issues, not Department of Ecology issues. Make sure the Class A system stays a Class A system. CB adds that the well will be on the reservation so it’s the Indian Health Service that would be involved.

Discussion of different ways cross-connections can happen and how to prevent it. Discussion of money available. AH—Our match is \$375,000.

2:32:10—CB—the issue of tribal water rights came up at the water banking meeting. Someone said he had a water right to sell on the reservation side of the Okanogan. We don’t want to touch it because of the way we formed our water bank. Having a water right is one thing on non-Indian fee property. Transferring it into a different (*inaudible*) is another. We don’t have that going on here.

Discussion also includes the need for a cultural resource survey.

LJ—It’s not a requirement to be awarded the grant. The tribe may need a plan.

CB—An anticipated discovery plan. Usually written by architects. Maybe we can steal something.

Discussion of what the cultural resource survey might include.

2:40:30—LJ—Sheriff Budrow asks if he can come and talk to you about the grant contracts this morning.

AH—Right now? Sure.

AH—Shall we do the consent agenda?

CB—I move to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion passes 2-0.

CB—That tiny village idea is important.

LJ—Community Action is getting more and more involved in housing construction and development. They’ve got some things in the works to learn how to manage things.

AH—The grants, etc. Plus managing the housing and do wrap-around services. I know they don’t want to own them but I think it’d be good for them to own them. If there’s another owner, are they upholding their end of the deal for the award requirements?

LJ—I’ll meet with Nancy (Nash-Mendez, Housing Authority of Okanogan County) and Rena (Shawver, Community Action Council) in a few weeks to talk about these projects. It’ll be an on-going monthly meeting with the board.

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CB—Veterans’ dollars could be a big component. I’ll check to see if the Action Council keeps a separate count of veterans.

CB—The hardest affordable housing projects I’ve ever done was in Oroville. People came out of the woodwork to oppose it.

AH—Why’d they oppose it? They didn’t want those types of people living next door?

CB—That was pretty much it. We did the zoning to accommodate the desires of the community. We didn’t need hearings if the housing was duplexes and triplexes, just for big projects. But they opposed them.

2:51:15—CB—I move to approve Resolution 47-2024, to allow a new employees to be shadow trained by the employee who is leaving the position. Motion passes.

CB—I move to approve the Interlocal agreement between the county and Brewster. Motion passes.

2:55:15—PB arrives.

PB—We wrote a grant to get an embedded person—one year. The funds used to be earmarked for the task force. We’re only one of two departments in the state that received it.

PB—Wages, equipment, benefits to apply to a wellness person for deputies, fire fighters, EMS. It’s a mental health position. Running it as an extension of Omak’s program. We’ll hire one person who can be used throughout the county. We’re hoping she can work as a DCR (Designated Crisis Responder, a mental health professional). She’ll try to reach out to the right resources to deal with someone in crisis instead of putting the person in jail.

AH—So like if fire fighters or EMS come across someone in crisis, they can help with that, to?

PB—Yes. We have the chance to see how this works.

AH—We have a chance to deal with people who probably shouldn’t be in jail.

PB—Yes. Put all the resources in one bundle working in the whole county.

AH—There’s opioid money, too.

AH—If we come up with good projects, we can send them to the Opioid Council to get it vetted.

PB—We’ll do the data mining and combine with other counties.

AH—Just change the name on your document so that Commissioner Neal is the chair. Email the contract to Lanie. And if we have to DocuSign, we can print out a copy for our records.

AH—OK. Thanks for explaining it to us.

PB leaves.

3:06:25—CB—Remember we talked last week about the water bank and the application to the Sullivan right. I signed that application in Wenatchee at the Aspect office on Friday afternoon.

AH—We already talked about it and decided we wanted to get that.

AH—There’s a lot of farm land on the reservation with wheel lines but it’s not getting farmed. If there was water on a field there, can they sell it? That’s on the reservation but the water is out in the Columbia River.

Discussion about whether the water bank can buy water from the Tribes.

3:15:45—CB—I move to approve the vouchers for payroll in the amount of \$1,789,754,45. Motion passes.

Commissioners adjourn at 12:17.