

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

Monday, Nov. 25, 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
SM—Stacy McClellan, Deputy Clerk of the Board
SD—Sheilah Delfeld, Okanogan County Farm Bureau
KP—Kathy Power, Okanogan County Property Rights Coalition
CT—Cathy Tate, commenter
SB—Shauna Beeman, commenter
RD—Rod Haerberle, commenter
BH—Brian Hanford, commenter
NB—Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
RHD—Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, Economic Alliance
DS—Dave Schulz, Commenter and former commissioner
ES—Emily Sisson, Commenter

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

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Summary of significant discussions:

- About a dozen people attend the meeting to make public comments. They would like the commissioners' Zone Code public hearing, scheduled for Monday, Dec. 2 at 5:00 PM, moved to a different date and time. They suggest March 25. They are also unhappy with the change to a minimum lot size of 160 acres in the Tunk Vally that the commissioners made in 2023. The one-hour exchange between the commenters and the commissioners is sometimes contentious. The commissioners do not reschedule the meeting.
- The commissioners hold budget study sessions for two budgets involving the Homeless Housing Coalition.
- The commissioners review the Economic Alliance's 2024 project prioritization list.
- In the afternoon, the commissioners hold a public hearing to discuss proposed procedural amendments to the Okanogan County Code.
- Meeting adjourned at 2:07

-3:08:37—Pledge of Allegiance

Approximately 10-12 people are in the audience for today's meeting, presumably for the public comments portion at 9:15.

CB—The agenda looks good to me.

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-2:58:55—Member of the audience asks what they're waiting for.

JN—Public comment starts at 9:15.

-2:54:38 JN—It's 9:15 and time for public comments. Who wants to start?

SD—I'm Sheilah Delfeld on behalf of the Okanogan County Farm Bureau. I'm here to ask you to reconsider the time for your zone code public hearing. Ag producers are still feeding their cattle and wouldn't be able to leave in time for the meeting.

SD—The notice for the meeting was in the newspaper on Wednesday. There were two huge funerals of people very important to our community this weekend, one was in Ritzville. Also, a huge football game in Wenatchee with Okanogan High School.

SD—Your decision to make this meeting on Monday, when your office will be closed on Thursday & Friday. Plus, our families are coming for Thanksgiving. The idea of having time to prepare comments to correct the zone code is insane to me. Again, I ask you to reconsider. You've met the definition of 10-day notice, but ethically and morally, are you going to keep the comment period after everything I've explained about what this community has been through? There's really no pressure to have the comment period on Monday. There's no deadline.

AH—So what would be a good time of day?

SD—6:30 would be better, but there's no reason that we have to have the meeting right now. Question #1 is why are we? If there isn't time to hear all the comments, continue the hearing. It seems like you're restricting the time for comments. That probably isn't what you've done, but that's the appearance.

-2:47:25—I'm Kathy Power, representing the Okanogan County Property Right Coalition. Basically, I know you guys are considerate, but this doesn't appear that way. It's not a public hearing if the public can't be there. People are interested in what's going on with this document. We need to get some of these people involved instead of just the Planning Department or hired people. I suggest we put together a citizens' council to get this document that people will be happy with done. Thank you.

-2:45:36—CT—I've got something to say. Everybody here knows what they did to Tunk Mountain. You and you voted for it (pointing to Commissioners Branch and Hover). Don't let them do it to the valley. It all affects all of us. Andy, you promised you'd write back but I've heard nothing from your office. Nothing concerning trying to find grant money to fix all the shit the Sorianos and you, Chris, did up on Tunk. It affects us. We'll lose it all. They're going to screw us all if you get the opportunity.

CT—And shame on you, Andy, for not writing back when I've written.. Where's the grant to look up the water on Tunk? Chris Branch, where are they? I know you're out of here and you don't care, and you've gotten your moneys. (Someone in the audience makes an inaudible comment.) I know you don't live up there. I know who you're in bed with. So does everybody in this room. You can try to dispute it, but we all know.

CT—So Andy, shame on your office. Obviously, it didn't matter to you as much as you pretended it mattered. You said when you voted for the 160 (*acre minimum parcel size*) on Tunk and then said you didn't realize what you signed when you signed it.

AH—That's not what I said.

CT—It is.

AH—I said I *regretted* voting for 160s.

CT—So why did you vote for it? Why didn't you read it over properly?

AH—I'm not going to get into this.

CT—Why didn't you read it? It's like signing your divorce papers and not knowing you're not going to get jack-shit.

AH—I've also gotten emails from people up there who said their wells went dry *again*.

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CT—None of ours have. The old natural spring from 110 years ago hasn't gone dry.

AH—The lady said her well and three other neighbors had it happen to them.

CT—Nobody told me anything like that.

Man in the audience—What's the elevation difference in Cathy's location and the location of the wells that went dry?

AH—I don't know. She only said the wells had gone dry.

CT—All she had to do, just like Nancy Soriano, is say we have no water. We've had ground surface water and ponds all this year, but it only took one person to say she doesn't have water, so now we have to prove our water. She probably has others calling in too. I used to be friends with her, but we're done with her political agendas. That's all it is up there.

-2:42:24—JN—Anybody else?

SB—Good morning, commissioners. I'm Shauna Beeman. I'm here today to address the shroud of secrecy on this document that we're all opposed to. I encourage you commissioners to reconsider this meeting that's so inconvenient for people in this valley.

SB—Andy, you attended our Property Rights Coalition meeting. At that time, you were asked directly if a code enforcements officer had been hired, and if so, where the budget line for that was. You specifically said that no, to your knowledge, no code enforcement officer was hired and there wasn't any budget for it. I already knew there was no budget because I'd looked at the budget. So, my question is now why do we have a code enforcement officer. This guy was promoted to that position about the time of our meeting in September. You had to have known, and why weren't you forthcoming with that information. You work for us. I think there's so much secrecy. I think you should let someone other than the Planning Department take care of this.

SB—We need more time. The community isn't ready for it. There's no deadline. I know you want it off your plate. So do we. But I urge you to delay this meeting and let a committee do it, not your head Planner.

-2:39:12—JN—Anybody else? Rod?

RH—I'm Rod Haeberle. I'm on the endangered species list in Okanogan County. I'm one of the few remaining cattle ranchers who hasn't been pushed out of business by the ever-encroaching government we have on the west side of the state—called Futurewise, Conservation Northwest, and the worthless Department of Ecology. It never should have been founded. You guys are becoming victims to trying to uphold it. Here's my opinion. I've been in a million meetings. Ecology never needed to be founded because if you drilled a well in 1900 and got a water right then, and now someone comes in and drills a well that affects the 1900 well, that new well should shut down.

RH—Talking about the Tunk, if what if just told you is applied to that, you wouldn't be in the mess you're in right now. I've been here all my life (76 years) on a cattle ranch that's 112 years old and every year, I see the county take something from us the stroke of a pen, with the 160 acres deal and the fish deal. I feel like the board, excluding Jon Neal, was warned if you opened up the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, you'd open up a can of worms. Well, I think about \$120,000 last year was paid to high-falutin attorneys from the west side to try to tell us the best way to handle this zoning issue. Am I close? \$120,000?

AH—No.

RH—That's not counting the impact on people who've made a million trips trying to defend their stance, or the government money that's been paid here. Put it all together and it's huge. It's been going on for 20 years. Lawsuit after lawsuit. In my livelihood, in addition to the priority for everything in this county, water for *fish*. That's the priority. It'll put me out of business. My Johnson Creek drainage comes out of the ground on our property and flows to Riverside, and it'll put us all out of business. If this state is dumb

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enough, and it is, to pass the buffer bill, in addition to the Endangered Species Act with is a big overreach, it'll put us out of business. Guarantee it. Andy, you should know that.

RH—So what do we do? Keep paying money to anyone who wants to sue us? How much have we paid since 2014? It's millions.

RH—Here's what I advocate. In the \$120,000 that was paid to the big high-falutin attorneys, not to mention the little local attorney that should have caught this, in 2021 I think House Bill 1241 says *nothing* has to be done until 2027 on any of this crap for counties like us—non-Growth Management Act (GMA) counties. We paid more than \$120,000 for that plus a lot more paid by people running around scrounging, trying to save themselves. We've had land basically stolen from people in Tunk Creek, larger cattle people or larger landowners. The minute you zoned the land 160 acres, you know what you did? The 20-acre parcel that sold for \$20,000/acre—that's not going to happen anymore. A guy who had 2,000 acres, and if he got screwed again on cattle prices, he could have sold 20 acres to help bail him out. Is that a taking? Chris, is that a taking?

CB—No.

RH—Yes, it is. If it was your house that they took, you'd be screaming. But the people we sit over here in our lives, get the paychecks no matter what we do.

CB—It'd be great to have that conversation with you...

RH—I've had that conversation with you. You're still trying to take water for fish. That's the priority in this county. Every person I know in agriculture says that's right. Look at all the money that's spent trying to get one more fish. They don't care if they destroy a 1,000 head cattle ranch like mine. Do you care?

CB—I care, but...

RH—you care more about is that one damn fish.

CB—I can't have a conversation because you're just going to keep talking over me.

RH—That's right. I'm going to talk over you because I've been ran over by you. Ran over! Thousands and thousands of dollars stole from my family by you. And Andy, you never should have gone in with opening up this Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner DeTro tried to tell you.

CB—Commissioner DeTro was the one who suggested we go clear to 160. Did you know that?

RH—I don't believe you

CB—I think it's on video.

RH—you dig it up and show it to me, because I've been a friend of his forever.

CB—OK. Commissioner Hover, do you remember that?

AH—I do. So, when we looked at it in the very beginning, we talked about doing 40 acres minimums.

There was a conversation here. Commissioner DeTro said it should be more like 80s or 100s. This went to the Planning Commission, and they came back to us with a recommendation of 160.

Several people in the audience—But we were never notified. The people involved weren't notified. The notice in the Oroville newspaper instead of down here because it was cheaper. The three of you work for us. Those impacted by your decision should have been notified and have an opportunity to comment. It was published in a newspaper that a majority of these people don't get. It would have been better to notify those people who were directly impacted. It wouldn't have been a lot of people. But it impacted them immediately by the stroke of your pen signing that document. That's what all of us here say—we have to have better communication or we're going to keep hammering on you. We're not being represented in a fair and equitable manner.

RH—you get a shout-out for mentioning the stroke of the ink pen because it stole more from the citizens than any other thing you can put your finger on. If we all voted to do that, it would have been different.

AH—I can tell you the exact day some of you came into this room and were hammering on us to do the 160-acre zoning. One person who was actually here here, who lives in Tunk, described a situation where the county was going to allow 4 or 5 wells to go in above his house. He said to us: Do not do that. It could impact our water.

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RH—And he had an agricultural water right. I was here that day and I remember him.

AH—And he has a house. It's difficult how to protect as many people as possible, or do they even need protection. If you've got a person who lives here saying they shouldn't give building permits out because it will affect the water...

Audience—That's because the Sorianos gave 300 acres to the (*inaudible*) and they punched all the wells they wanted. That's what affected Jack.

AH—There are 700 lots in the Tunk Valley.

Audience—Not down where we live. Not down the middle part of the valley. It's all coming out of that little time piece of the west coast living up at (*inaudible*) Creek.

Another person—And those lots are land-locked, and a majority will never be able to be built on.

CB—They can get access through easements.

CB—I remember saying something to the Farm Bureau once. The subdivision that moves in next to you in probably the biggest threat you have to farms. If you have the right to subdivide your land and make more property owners, they have property rights, too. I represent more than a few people in this county. I represent a lot of people, and they may disagree with everybody in this county. The narrative that's going around today hasn't had a lot of good discussions. I hear a lot of accusations, especially ones singling me out, that aren't true. And I'll never have the opportunity to...

RH—Like what? Give us an example.

CB—No. I won't. I don't have to do that. The other thing is—one missing piece of subdivisions in remote places, is that we have other expenses, too. The more exempt subdivisions we make that don't have to improve the road, well, that road is going to be improved someday, and the taxpayer is going to pay. It'll be costly. It's so remote. So, there are issues about subdivisions in remote places that aren't just water issues. I know you're focused on water, but...

RH—It's not that so much. If you go back to what I was saying, I say—go ahead and build your house. But if you affect the water right, you'll get shut down. If you don't get water, that's on you.

CB—If you're using exempt wells for potable water at your place, how do you shut down a household? Just tell them to pack up and leave?

RH—They can do whatever they want to do. First in right is first in time. It's that simple. Instead of having a multi-million-dollar Ecology Department running around doing what they're doing.

Audience—Just follow the law.

CB—We try to follow the law as best we can. And there's always a lawyer who wants to take you to court about that. We walked into office with a lawsuit in place.

RH—My point exactly. Here's my 2¢ worth. I have seen the county being sued and sued. And they pay and pay and pay. I've seen you guys sit across the table from them and do the best you can. I respect that from Chris and Andy. Jon's new and I respect him, too. But it's never going to stop being that way until we get three commissioners who see we've spent millions of dollars on lawsuits and lots every time. Then you get people like us involved. You're trying to defend us against these ridiculous lawsuits, because you're trying to do the best you can. You get water for fish because we got sued. Until we get commissioners who stand up to what I'm saying—we sue Futurewise and Conservation Northwest for stealing our timber, introducing wolves that eat our deer, that will eventually eat our cattle. (I have a friend in Colville who loses \$1,000,000 a year to wolves.) It's ridiculous.

CB—That's easy to say. Why don't you run for office?

RH—Just a minute. You can have an hour when I get done. This county sooner or later will have to stand up and sue those son-of-a-bitches who sue us and are taking our water for fish, the endangered species—steelhead. Until we stand up and sue them who are suing us and costing us—do like Ferry County—They say across for years as voluntary GMA, and they regretted it from the day they did it. They found themselves sitting across the table from the bureaucrats every month and losing, losing, losing. Andy, you know that, don't you? Two of those commissioners finally counter-sued them. I was told by one of

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them, the minute we sued, all of it stopped. We won and we're done with GMA. As long as you keep negotiating, they're going to keep pushing. The west side never stops.

CB—Ferry County was responding to a mistake they made way back when.

RH—I agree. But when they counter-sued, it stopped.

CB—I don't know that.

RH—I do.

AH—We'll look it up.

Audience—The people of Okanogan will support you if you do that. We're defending you.

AH—The money we've spent on attorneys. I won't name the entity, but we've beat them three times so far and guess where we're at now. We're still in court. The appeals court.

RH—Good. Don't stop.

AH—We're not, but it costs us money.

RH—It costs us money either way.

AH—Yes. But we actually are doing those things. We're not going out and suing others, but we're defending you.

Audience—One other point. We have a housing shortage, but everything we do is stifling growth in the county. If we can't subdivide, we can't build homes to address the shortage. But we can have more low-income housing. Those people are getting grants, and they vote, and they take rights away from us property owners. Somewhere there has to be equality starting to happen. For those of us trying to make a living in agriculture, we aren't being fairly represented. We need better communications. We don't want it jammed down our throats. This appears to be a big rush to get it done. There's the code enforcement officer. There are fines outlined in the rules you're trying to implement. They're not admissible in a court of law. 90 days in jail for a code violation?

AH & CB—That's what the rules have been for a long time. I don't know about admissible.

Audience—We haven't had a code officer before. And you should know about admissible. You're trying to write a document or change it, and we need to get it right.

AH—Most of the code violations are a criminal offense.

CB—Misdemeanor.

AH—Name one person you know who's violated the code and been thrown in jail. That's been on the books at least for the last eight years that I've been a commissioner.

Audience—Well, it needs to be removed.

AH—Yes. We're trying to go to civil penalties. If your neighbor starts bringing in vehicles and they drain oil and transmission fluid that's running on to your property, do you expect us not to do anything because it's their personal right to do what they like?

Audience—One property owner should sue the other. Why does the county have to be involved?

AH—So you're saying you should spend your money to stop the person infringing on your property instead of the county stopping him?

Audience—Yeah.

CB—Not everybody in the county agrees with you.

Audience—Just go talk to your neighbor. Everybody should be good neighbors.

AH—It'd be great if everybody would be a good neighbor.

RH—House Bill 1241.

AH—Someone mentioned it in the comments, so I read it. It says we have to have all our plans integrated by 2027. We can't just say—OK, here's the Shoreline Management Plan—and that fills the bill for that. We need a complete integration of all of our plans.

RH—And what you're saying is we have to have all the plans integrated by 2027?

AH—I'm saying we have to ask the attorneys what we have to do to comply with this.

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RH—I hope the people are happy when they're eating fish. We've lost our timber industry. We've lost 2266 acre/feet of water in WRIA 49 (Water Resource Inventory Area 49—the Okanogan River Valley) going downstream *forever*. That 1,500 acres of land that can't be irrigated. That concerns me and it just keep happening. I'm not saying you commissioners can fix it, but you guys just keep rolling with it.

AH—What's the suggestion from this group for a different date.

Audience—Maybe in March. There's no rush.

CB—I've received extensive comments from Sheilah. Lots of people have commented. There are a lot of people in the county and not everybody agrees with this group. I represent a lot of different people.

RH—Are they people from this county or that other county that keeps giving shit to us.

CB—Some were from the Methow. They're part of the county.

RD—Part time.

CB—That's the way the system works. If you want to challenge the way I was brought into office, you can do it all day long. I suggest you run for office. You get up here and file those lawsuits. It's easy to say all these things, but you know as well as I do, it looks different up here.

RH—I know that. But when I see us giving up something to conform to Trout Unlimited, or something to do with fish, or taking water out of the county, we need some basic grounding in the value of this county. I don't think it's wolves.

CB—If we hadn't done the work we have, anybody could walk in and buy the water rights out of this basin. We've made a lot of progress making sure this doesn't happen.

RH—Tell me about WRIA 49 and the 2,266 acre/feet.

CB—We're in the middle of purchasing that water right now. Are you talking about the Pine Creek water?

RH—The water went to helping fish.

AH—The bill that was passed said WRIA 49 did not have a reserve of water. The commissioners could have subdivided the county all we wanted to. But a court case said we have to figure out legally available water. The legislature thought it was necessary to fix this. The big push was instream flow and water enhancement for fish. We had to figure out how to make it possible to build that many houses in the area. We had a ton of water-to-water projects. The sale of Antoine Ranch lost us 1/3 of the water.

RH—They lost 400 acres of corn production and a feed lot for cattle production. The study done said that might get one more fish in Antoine Creek.

AH—That was a private sale. They could have sold all the water down the river.

RH—It's like Fish & Game has an item in its budget to buy recreational property. They've bought up all the biggest cattle ranches in the county with my tax dollars. It's been going on for 20 years. I object to it.

AH—What I object to is someone who moves into a subdivision created by a developer who was able to get a lot of dough, skip town or whatever. Then those people want to tell me when I should be applying my fertilizer or when I can spray. Would it be better for you if they build 1,000 houses on a big property or if the Fish & Wildlife bought it. I understand objecting to your tax dollars going to buy it. I object to my tax dollars going to Europe to fund monkey research or something. Sometimes it's the lesser of two evils. And I love to hunt. If you've got a willing seller who would rather the property not be developed, but is willing to sell to the game department, I'm OK with that, more than having it developed.

RH—The Heart Ranch, right next door to me. They had 750 head of cattle. This stuff started when they said to the legislature that they need a line item in the state budget to exist. That's funny, because they put \$10,000,000 line in the budget for 10 years. After that, it would go away, or they could renew it. But what did they do with the \$10,000,000/year. They (*inaudible*) with it. So, I'm next door 9,280 acres of the Heart Ranch right next door to me. Beautiful ranch.

Audience—Until they planted it with brush.

RH—There were three or four people who made a bid on that property. One was a real estate agent was going to 20-acre that whole thing. Three or four ranchers bid on it, too. I asked the Fish & Wildlife why

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not lease the property to the guy. I didn't want it to go to the developer. The game department turned it into a weed infestation. Sheilah can vouch for it.

SD—In less than 10 years.

AH—The ones F&W are currently asking about. We ask if it's in agriculture now. We're OK with the purchase if it'll stay in agriculture. Also, conservation easements.

SD—I think you need to ask how long has it been in active agriculture. A rancher died several years ago, and the property is for sale.

AH—I know there's a lot of problems over the years with the F&W buying those properties. As a person, I don't like to have to bid against them if I want to buy a neighbor's property. But as a commissioner, if I were to say to someone that he couldn't sell his property to the game department, that's a taking.

RH—I agree, but that's not my point. But why does my tax dollars go to buying it. If our government buys up all the property, then where are you—down the road 10 steps to Communism without ever firing a shot. We're sanctioning it on lots of levels. The Endangered Species Act does it.

SD—And private property provides a tax base for the county. Ferry County doesn't have a tax base. It's all state and federal land with only a small percentage of privately owned land.

SD—I want to conclude with HB 1241. Passed in 2022 and it's ironic that I'm the person to point out to the commissioners when it should have been the Planning Director or whoever watches legislation for you. It was passes specifically for partially planned counties. We're one of eleven. Go to the Washington Department of Commerce website. There's a workbook and check list to meet regulations for that law. Also, Commerce has offered to come here to provide training about it. The Planning Director is the one in charge of the Shoreline Plan, etc. that fall under HB 1241. We have to be in compliance by 2027. We aren't required to have a Comp Plan. But if we do have a plan, it has to be in compliance with Critical Areas, Shoreline and that we bring the tribe to the table for coordination. I encourage you to invite Commerce here for training for you and Planning.

SD—So to answer your question, maybe mid-March would be a good time. You could get the Commerce training before that.

CB—What about the last deadline? Didn't the county have to do Critical Areas Planning under the GMA before. We're partially planning under the GMA, and you know that.

SD—I'm just telling you there was a new bill and a new deadline.

CB—We're aware of the deadline.

SD—So I'm asking you to make a motion. (to CB—And I'm not going to argue with you.)

CB—I hate arguing with you, too. It doesn't get me anywhere.

Audience—Then don't argue with her. There's no point in passing something now that we'll have to redo to meet the checklist required by this bill.

CB—We have prior deadlines to have been made. They weren't made to satisfy Critical Areas and resource lands. It's taken so long in a project that started a long time ago, before any of us were here. It started back then, and it's never really accomplished. It was challenged. By 2027, the county will have new things to do. It's good to coordinate the plans.

CB—By the way—The Planning Department is charged with implementing the plan, but the commissioners are charged with adopting the plan. Everybody has a view of this. There's a current narrative and how much of the information is accurate? I'm hearing some things that aren't accurate. We're the guys who have to decide what isn't going to get the county in trouble and what's the cost going to be. Every one of us pays taxes. We're responding to lots of people, not just the ones in this room.

Audience—Remember, we're a republic for which we stand. Special interest groups were not the majority that voted you into office. The majority still rules in this county and this country. We're representing the majority, I assure you. I just want to remind you of that.

CB—We can discuss the Constitution if you want.

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JN—We need to move forward.

BH—Can I comment? My name's Brian Hanford. I've worked all around. I've been on every dirt road in this county. I've been to places where the wells gone dry. They don't move away, they bring in water.

AH—We didn't say that.

BH—Let me finish. When I'm done, I'll allow you to comment. I've talked to big ranchers. I've see multiple people bring in water. You don't have to move. There are other options.

BH—Second, I'd like from the committee—who wrote the planning that's coming up? I have serious concerns about things other than water. And what was paid for the document?

CB—A good part was written before we came into office.

BH—That's not what I'm asking. What firm was paid to write this document.

CB—The Zone Code?

AH—asks Pete who they'd hired.

BH—You're telling me you hired a company, and you have no idea who it was?

AH—I'm telling you we hire companies every day. So, I can't remember their name.

PP—I can't remember.

AH—Oneza!! That was it.

BH—And they're not from our area? If we spent money for an out of area firm, why not on an in area firm?

AH—Because an in-area firm didn't respond to our Request for Qualifications. I'd rather give money to people in the county.

CB—The main thing is...

BH—Just a minute. I'm not done speaking.

CB—I'm not done speaking either, and this is my meeting. We are going way off the agenda today, so I'm going to say something. If someone prepares a zone code, it's up to us to review the work and to make changes based on comments we received. We did that. That's what process is about.

BH—I've heard multiple times exactly what it was and what went on.

AH—We don't have enough staff to do a project like this. We hired consultants.

BH—I know all this. I know the process.

AH—Maybe the people behind you don't know, so I'm answering them, too. There might not have been any other respondents to our RFQ.

PP—We had to reach out to the American Planning Association to get that one.

Audience—How about involving the property owners in the process.

CB—We have to get a good representation of the property owners involved in the process. There are a lot.

AH—The Planning Commission—we had a meeting with them and told them do what they have to do. They gave us all of these recommendations. It wasn't us just writing it.

Audience—Talking to board members on the Planning Commission—they didn't feel they were listened to.

CB—Ten years ago there was a Planning meeting at the Agriplex. By the time the Plan was adopted, that got rendered down to a few special interests. Special interests from both valleys came to us and asked what happened to all those comments we made. I couldn't answer that.

Audience—In 2010. It was a perfect example of special interest groups trying to take over our county.

AH—One thing—we need to get going.

Audience—Are we going to have a motion?

AH—No.

JN—To have a motion to continue, we need a specific day.

CB—I'm not going to make a motion today.

BH—(asks the audience for a date.) I move we meet March 25.

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AH—That’s what you want. We’ll think about it.

BH—Thanks.

Audience—We have 90 minutes to get it into the paper. Are you going to do that?

AH—No.

JN—We make the decision, but we need see if the Agriplex is available, and a lot of other things.

JN—It’s not a no. There are a lot of things that need to be tied up.

AH—But it’s a no right now.

JN—I apologize about the 5:00 time.

The commenters leave the room.

-1:35:25—JN—Do we want to do Department Heads?

CB—Quickly.

MG—I just want to make sure Commissioner Branch signs the signature page.

CB—I’ll sign it.

JN—Nick?

NB—I’m good. I’m leaving.

PP—Pete Palmer, Planning Director. The only thing I want to say is:

1. We’ll be open all day on Wednesday. We aren’t closing early for Thanksgiving.
2. The compliance officer—it’s a senior level planner who’s working on our backlog of compliance issues and creating a file and database, so we know what’s coming in. We’re a complaint driven county. We don’t have a person going out looking for issues. The guy is just basically writing letters to property owners.

PP—That’s all. Have a great Monday!

-1:32:45—CB (to the people in the Housing Coalition). A Customs Agent was talking to us one time and said sometimes people think we’re grouchy and maybe it’s because we were just talking to grouchy people ahead of you in the line. So, we’ll try not to be grouchy to you.

AH—I’m in a perfect mood. I just got a soda.

Budget Study Session for the Housing Coalition.

-59:35—Infrastructure Committee Prioritization report.

RHD—I’m Roni Holder Diefenbach from the Economic Alliance. We’re the Infrastructure Committee and Executive Committee Members.

I appreciate very much having Pete and LJ sit on our committee. And we’re really going to miss Commissioner Branch.

RHD—We’re here today to present our 2025 recommendations for Construction, Planning and Community & Economic Development Projects. We met last week to hear 17 proposals. We scored the applications and here’s how we ranked them:

Construction projects:

1. Tonasket Perfect Passage,
2. Pateros Small Improvements
3. Winthrop River Walk
4. Brewster Swamp Creek
5. Pateros (*inaudible*)
6. Tonasket Airport Taxi way rescue

Planning Projects:

1. Winthrop-Pearrygin Lake storage water

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2. Omak East 97
3. Winthrop Wastewater lift station
4. Tonasket 4th Street Multi-Modal improvements
5. Omak Stampede Concourse
6. Omak Public Safety
7. Tonasket South Annexation
8. Tonasket Municipal Building

Community and Economic Development Projects:

1. Completion of the Ovak (?) Building
2. Fire expansion
3. North Central Washington Rink

RHD—We're here to ask your approval of the ranking. We're not awarding funds this year—only every three years—but we still do rankings.

AH—Do we have a resolution. I move to have the clerk prepare a resolution approving the Economic Alliance's 2025 project rankings. Motion passes 3-0.

?—This was an interesting mix of projects this year. You commissioners should have people with the projects come up and present them to you. Neither Chelan nor Douglas County does anything like this.

RHD—We're still waiting to hear back from the Department of Commerce about how to do grant writing. That will help get funding for these projects.

CB—I abstained from the prioritization so I could vote here.

-47:55—AH to CB—The whole Thanksgiving thing, it's interesting that on three days' notice, they can get all those people in here at 9AM, but the two weeks' notice wasn't enough. The only thing I can think of is that they don't want you.

CB—That must be part of it.

AH—But with a new commissioner coming in who wouldn't know anything about this stuff. The 5:00 was probably a mistake.

PP—I think that was because we didn't know how long the meeting would go on.

AH—I think we should do it, and if the meeting is going to go on for too long, we do whatever we need to do to make it work.

JN—And I feel bad about people who won't hear about the change and show up next Monday.

PP—And even if they aren't able to attend the meeting, they were still able to make comments. I'd like to have you also consider—because of time restraints—time limits and whether people can speak if they've already submitted a written comment.

AH—I'm not going to worry about people who've already submitted a comment. Everyone can comment for up to three minutes.

CB—I appreciate that approach.

PP—Can I point out—what we're doing here—The changes made in this version of the Zone Code all result from the stipulation order except for Special Use section about energy facilities. Nobody except the PUDs commented about this. I think the people who were here today wanted to go into the weeds about things not in this revision. I want to focus on this revision. We know there will be another revision in the future—Floodplains, Critical Areas.

AH—Will you make sure you look up that House Bill they were talking about and have Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) look at it. Get her on it right away. We have to be done by June, 2027.

PP—We're working towards that. We need to get Floodplains and Critical Areas completed.

AH—And we need to have a discussion about the process of the Planning Commission. We need to tell them we have a deadline.

CB—Putting off what we're in the middle of right now doesn't sit right to me.

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PP—We negotiated timelines in good faith, and even though we didn't hit them all, we don't want to stop working towards it now.

PP and LJ discuss staffing needs for next Monday's meeting.

Recess for lunch at 11:30.

-38:10B—JN—It's 1:30. Time for a public hearing about procedural amendments to the Okanogan County Code Title 20.08 (Application Process) and 14.15 (Shoreline Plan).

JN—I'll open it up to staff.

PP—Good afternoon. I'm Pete Palmer, Director of Planning. We're having a public hearing with the BOCC regarding the procedural amendments under the stipulation order to the permit applications under Okanogan County Code Title 20.08 (Application Process) and 14.15 (Shoreline Program). Basically, it adds permitting track ware requirements and process into the two codes. This will add all the permits being issued to our permit tracking software, so the public and others can see permits in real time.

PP—RCW 36.70.800 allows an *"amendment to the text of a zoning ordinance which does not impose, remove or modify any regulation theretofore existing and affecting the zoning status of land shall be processed in the same manner prescribed by this chapter for the adoption of an official control except that no public hearing shall be required either by the commission or the board."*

PP—In talking with Esther, we knew we aren't required to hold a public hearing, but decided to have one, anyway.

PP—We received one comment—from Leonard Jordan at the Department of Ecology. He said anytime you update the SMP, the ultimate approval is from the Department of Ecology. Because we just completed our periodical update, it's still under review. Kurt Danison is reviewing Brewster's plan, and ours is next in the stack. He and I will talk again after the holidays, and I'll tell him about this minimal update.

AH—When's our next update?

PP—2027, and it will include more than the statutory updates this one included.

JN—Any public comment?

SD—I'll comment even though it probably won't do any good. I'd like to know what we're commenting about. I looked at the agenda this morning to see when public comments were, and I saw this notice. I couldn't find anything about this on the Planning Department website. There's nothing for me to review to know what I'd be commenting on. The minutes for the Planning Department only go through March.

PP—The Planning Commission wasn't needed to do this amendment. I gave them an update on Oct. 28. They approved their endorsement of the changes.

PP—On the Planning Department's website, the [documents](#) are under the "Plan" tab.

SD—Where am I supposed to look on the website?

PP—It's under "Plans and Projects", then click on "Current Projects, Zone Code Revision". Plus, it was advertised in the newspaper.

JN—Stacy, any comments?

Stacy—I thought we were supposed to be here as Planning Commission members. When I found out we weren't required to attend, I decided to attend anyway.

JN—Emily?

ES—County Watch puts out a weekly update of what happens at BOCC meeting, and this code amendment has been mentioned a couple of times. If Shielah signs up at CountyWatch.org, maybe that would help her.

SD—I shouldn't have to do that to find out what happens.

LS—I'll just say I was able to find the documents, but it took a little while. Sometimes they aren't easy to find.

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DS—I'm Dave Schulz of Twisp. *(Mr. Schulz is given 10 minutes to comment. He talks about water rights issues over the years that he's faced both personally and as a county commissioner. He urges people to get involved instead of just complaining.)*

AH—shares his screen and shows a red-line version of the [amendments](#) so people can easily see the changes.

CB—It expands the scope of the notice to include our tracking system?

PP—Correct.

PP—And our permit tracking system is already up and running.

PP—Also, as part of this process, I needed to make sure this will be on the agenda on the Dec. 2 meeting so you can adopt it.

JN—OK. I close the public hearing.

JN—Anything else for today?

JN—What about the hearing on Monday evening. Should we allow people to donate their three minutes to someone else? Personally, I don't want one person to be able to talk for 30 minutes.

SD—Why?

JN—I think people can be slighted by having another person talk for so long. Just my opinion.

AH—We should see how many people want to testify and set the deadline accordingly—3 or 5 minutes. I'm not a fan of donating time.

CB—I'm not either. Everyone will have a chance to testify. Base the time limit on how many people show up. People who had made written comments should be able to testify at this meeting, too.

JN & AH agree.

JN—Adjourned at 2:06

LJ—I need someone on the board to sign the *(inaudible)*.

CB—I move we reconsider the adjournment. Motion passes 3-0.

AH—I move to have the chair sign the sales document between Okanogan County and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for the sale of the property in the middle of the Methow River. Motion passes 3-0.

JN—Now I adjourn at 2:07.