

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, March 25, 2024 AM & PM

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
NB—Nick Bates, Fairground Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
DW—Dan Wolf, TD &H Engineer
Nat—Natalie (*family name unknown*) TD & H Engineer
PJ—Pam Johnson, County Treasurer
CH—Cari Hall, County Auditor
TM—Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Pete Palmer, Planning Director, discusses a grant application for water banking. Commissioner Branch says he thinks the county should hire a Water Resources Manager to handle water banking instead of using someone in the Planning Department. Palmer also discusses plans for the continued re-zone hearing that's scheduled for the Argiplex that evening.
- The Sheriff's Office is applying for a Fire Arms Safety and Violence Prevention grant. The grant includes funding to hire a core outreach specialist to serve as a co-responder and develop a collaborative relationship between the Sheriff's Office, fire fighters and EMTs. Commissioner Branch thinks hiring the right person for this job will be the key to its success.
- The commissioners hold a 30 minute executive session, under RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)—to discuss potential litigation, inviting Esther Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor.
- Meeting adjourns at 2:05.

01:00—Pledge of Allegiance

LJ—Cameron (Deputy Clerk of the Board) called in sick today.

LJ—Keekan (?) has resigned to go to school to train for a different profession. She gave three weeks' notice. We hope to get some applications for her position.

CB—The Forest Plan draft we're working on, we narrowed the scope. Took out the whole part about community economic development. (*CB's microphone doesn't seem to be turned on and he's very hard to hear.*)

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LJ—We have David Bowen, the new Department of Ecology Central Region Director, coming on the 2nd. Is there anything in particular you want to talk to him about?

AH—He reached out to me and I'm curious if he's got any activities planned in Okanogan County.

AH—At the Watershed Council Thursday, we were talking about drought. I'm interested in talking to him about drought planning.

CB—Do they have a power point about what they did at the Columbia River caucus?

AH—I heard that the Washington Water Trust did a lot of leg work with the DOE, but I don't know how it works. They'd pay for (*inaudible*) cutting. I'm looking for the mechanisms about (water banking?) And the Watershed Council is trying to get Washington water Trust and DOE in a forum to have that discussion. It'd apply to the whole county.

LJ—I'll say you want to discuss the water banking issue and drought.

CB—Drought assistance programs.

10:55—CB—LATCF (Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund) is (*inaudible*) Discussion of LATCF and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) spending and reporting requirements. CB would like to see budget reports for the last few years.

CB—I was curious about projects we have underway.

AH—We haven't spent any principal from LATCF, just interest.

AH—Lists spending the county has done.

Economic Development—still ongoing

Food Bank—still ongoing

Tunk project--\$215,000

Fire Hall in Elmer City

Town of Nespelem for the water stuff—still ongoing

Town of Okanogan—still ongoing

The co-op hopes to send us a bill for \$500,000 for engineering.

The PUD can get spent out by then

The coroner. Don't know if the money is spent out yet.

Mobile Command. We should be spent out on that.

17:00—No public comments.

AH—The fire department is buying the extrication stuff. Is it foreign made? We need to be sure the company isn't on the barred list.

JN—I talked to Joanne (?) about that. Plus, I think it's all US made.

CB—Curtis Stein (?) is following up on when and how revenue loss funds are obligated. I didn't have time to get that question answered. So I'm thinking about another meeting.

AH to LJ—Will the Hearing Examiner contract be on the Consent agenda or will it be a separate item?

LJ—Probably a separate item.

22:35—AH—Remember when the USFS was here and we were talking about WATVs? The board of the Methow Valley Trails Collaborative voted to be a convener for a facilitated conversation. The USFS has some funding to facilitate a discussion about use of Forest Service trails. The county might try to bring this about. It's a part of the travel plan. I'd like to get the Okanogan County part of the Travel Plan done.

CB—We all want it done.

AH—I hope we could broaden the scope a little if we get the money for a facilitated conversations.

CB—I'm interested in it, but I'm not going to get my hopes up.

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CB—By the way, the DNR did a presentation with the forest communities. They talked about putting together fire arms ranges, so people wouldn't be out there just randomly shooting. It might be a good idea to fix up the gun ranges that aren't on Forest Service land. People wouldn't have to drive so far.

AH—WDFW has a gun range in the Methow.

CB—There's also a problem with people leaving trash all over.

AH—But there are also groups that clean them up.

CB—Eric Johnson (?) sent out Fire Arm and Archery Recreation Program Grant applications to me. I'll share it with people.

CB—The grant money for the RCO (Recreation and Conservation Office) comes in part from concealed weapon permit fee. We're eligible to apply—up to \$150,000—grant. (Reads allowed uses for the grant money.)

30:30—JN—Nick? Whenever you're ready.

NB mentions a gun range in Riverside that's heavily used.

NB—I've got a fee waiver for the Washington State High School Rodeo. There's a problem with weeds at the north end. They're asking for a partial fee waiver if we buy the spray and they spray it, or a full fee waiver if they buy the spray and spray it. It's goat heads.

AH—It's a in-kind contribution instead of a waiver.

NK—Last year we paid \$2,710 and again for \$2,500 for the entire grounds. They're just going to do around the track and arena.

AH—So maybe half. That sounds like a fair deal to me. What's the rental rate?

NK—It'd be \$750 for three days.

AH—That's a fair exchange.

Discussion of documenting the cost, and that the sprayer is licensed and what herbicide would be used.

AH—Talk to Larry (Hudson, Noxious Weed Board) and talk to Shelley (Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management). Get something that targets goat heads.

NB—Next, mice are in some of the buildings. The pest control people want \$1,000 per year.

AH—That's a good deal.

NB—I haven't seen the bid on paper yet.

AH—Use box traps instead of bait. Dogs get into the bait or eat the poisoned mice. We don't want a bunch of rat poison over there.

NB—I talked last time about rental schedules. I made a red-line version of the 2023 schedule. I took some buildings off if we aren't going to rent them.

Discussion of renting various buildings.

NB—I'll do a revised schedule and send it back to you.

NB—That's all.

44:50—JN—Pete?

PP—Friday I sent an agenda bill for the Hearing Examiner's contract. It's been to Shelley and Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) so it should be all ready.

PP—We have Aspect all set up to submit the grant for the water banking, but when I was looking through some of the tasks and descriptions, it has the Planning Department doing a lot of work—establish rules and guidance documents, preparing templates for permitting documents, process and procedures stuff. I don't have a problem with that, but I'd like to sit down with you guys and try to get a better idea of what's expected of us and how it'll effect our staff and budget.

AH—I think we'll have Tyson come from Aspect to talk about it.

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CB—I think we need a Water Resource Manager and keep it separate from Planning. Get the money to do that—use the money from the water bank to fund the position. I see it as separate from planning.

AH—If someone wants to get a mitigation permit, that’s not really planning. It’s a good idea if we can afford it. To Pete’s question—I see us as providing the input for the content. Aspect should put together the document. We should have it as an agenda item and discuss it.

AH—We’ve had a lot of discussion on the Watershed Council about water banking. Over there (Methow?) we think the water banking will be mostly for irrigation. If we wanted to do multi-family building projects outside the cities, we’d have to come up with the water. If the water bank buys agricultural water, it’s for irrigation. Look at Pine Creek water. You can use it for anything: industrial, irrigation, etc.

AH—And we also need to think about rates. What’s fair plus what will keep the bank going.

PP—We’re preparing for the hearing tonight. Talked to the Sheriff and he’ll be there. We’ll open the doors at 5:00 so people can get signed in.

CB—Will it go to 8:00?

PP—There’s no time limit set, but the Planning Commission tries to adjourn by 9:00.

AH—And you can limit comments to 3 minutes, but if you still don’t get through all the comments, another continuation is OK. We want everyone to be heard, but 3 minutes is 3 minutes.

CB—Also, a hearing needs to end at some time.

AH—You can get to a point where all the comments are repetitive.

CB—And if you keep it to just those who signed in to testify. If you don’t, how long can it go on? Eventually, they have to get a recommendation to us.

PP—OK.

53:30—JN—Mo?

MG—I’m Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management. I’ve got the meeting in Nespelem tomorrow about the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

MG—The rivers have come up just a little bit, but nothing yet to worry about.

MG—We’re getting a lot of calls about burn piles. Should we require people to tell us ahead of time? Then the fire departments wouldn’t have to go out to check on the smoke. They’re calling in everything. Discussion about how to deal with burn piles so the fire departments don’t have to check on them. MG will discuss the situation with his fire advisory committee.

MG—We lost some money from the Homeland Security grant. It used to be \$65,000, but it got reduced and now they won’t fund what we want to do. They gave it to King County. But now they’ll fund it one more year.

MG—That’s all I’ve got.

1:02:15—LJ—EM asks for an executive session at 11:00 today. It’s the one CB had asked about it.

JN—OK.

LJ—She’d like to add another one tomorrow, but needs to talk to the other attorneys to set a time.

JN—OK.

LJ—There are a few items for you to consider. The Sheriff’s employees contract that Shelley says needs to be signed today. There’s the Hearing Examiner’s contract to be signed, and there’s the Sheriff’s Fire Arms Safety and Violence Prevention contract with the Department of Commerce for grant funding.

LJ—Another item—Maybe you want to talk to Mike Worden (Dispatch Center) about it beforehand. It’s a proposal for architectural services for the storage building. It’s an amendment to the MJ Neal

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agreement. It's for \$13,500 and concerns design for a back-up generator that may be purchased later. It's from the Capital Improvement Budget.

AH—It's the Bond Fund, not Capital Improvements. We don't need to talk to Mike Worden before we OK it.

CB—The Fire Arms Safety and Violence Prevention is a broad grant program. (He reads through the document.)

CB—They're supposed to hire a core outreach specialist to serve as a co-responder. The grant is supposed to support and enhance crisis response, develop a collaborative relationship and prioritize responder wellness within Okanogan County.

CB—The collaborative relationship depends on the outreach specialist and it will be the key component. It's a huge thing.

1:15:10—CB—One thing missing in this agreement, the Fire Arms Safety one. It's an agreement with the Sheriff's Office and we sign it. The agreement is with us. Is there another document that the Sheriff signs agreeing to the scope of work, etc. Who manages this grant?

AH—The Sheriff does.

CB—It says it's an agreement with the Sheriff's Department, but we sign it. He's elected and we don't manage him.

AH—It's like a grant to the Auditor's Office or whatever. We want to see it to know if there's a match or whatever.

CB—The management of the grant is administrative. I agree with the commitments. I bring it up because we hold the sheriff accountable making sure these things are done. The first thing they do is hire an outreach coordinator. The program is very dependent on that person. Crisis response is one thing. Development of a collaborative relationship is another and that's the key thing to me. In building the collaboration, it's important to also consider our relationship with the Prosecutor's Office, and I question whether or not the Prosecutor's Office is prepared to collaborate. That's all I'll have to say about it.

CB—And nobody was here to record what I just said in the minutes.

AH—I noticed.

CB—We're responsible that the scope of work is satisfied. I think we all are. I'll be paying close attention to the hiring of that person. It's a pretty aggressive one-year program.

JN—Yes.

CB—Is the inclusion of the Police Department in Omak because they're the biggest city?

AH—No. They're already involved in this.

CB—Like I say, I'll be paying close attention.

CB summons LJ because he's about to make a motion.

1:23:35—CB—Was somebody supposed to follow up on Jim Lanthrup? (*Mr. Lanthrup discussed a problem he had with his tax assessment at the March 11, 2024 BOCC meeting.*)

JN--I talked to Larry (Gilman, County Assessor) the other day and I think it's all been figured out. I talked to him Saturday.

CB—I move to approve the Fire Arms Safety and Violence Prevention agreement.

As discussion, CB reiterates that he feels the Core Outreach Specialist is key to the program's success and he'll be paying attention to that part as the program develops.

Motion passes 3-0.

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CB—And I move to approve the agreement by and between the Okanogan Sheriff’s Employees Association and Okanogan County. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—I move to approve the Hearing Examiner’s contract for professional services will Mr. Andrew Kottkamp. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—And I move to authorize Amendment 1 to the MJ Neal and Associates agreement to provide storage space to the Coroner and Sheriff’s Department. Motion passes 3-0.

1:31:35—JN—We’ve got a discussion with Dan Wolf and Natalie from TD&H Engineering about the design of the jail’s heat pump.

DW—We’re submitting our proposal to replace the failed water-to-water heat pumps and heat exchanger to prevent the ground water from circulating through the heat pumps.

Discussion about the current equipment problems. The injection well doesn’t have the capacity to take the water at the rate that the heat pump required. DW and Natalie didn’t know about this issue, but can design a system that works around it. They’ll review the documentation about the injection well.

AH says he’s comfortable with the scope of work, knowing they can amend it if something comes up.

AH—I move to approve the engineering task order 01 for retention center heat pumps between the County and TD&H Engineering. Did we go through the bid process for this?

LJ—Yes.

AH—OK. Motion passes 3-0.

1:55:45—AH—Esther, do you need anybody else?

EM—No.

CB talks with EM off-mic about the subject of the executive session.

CB—I move to go to executive session until 11:20 (25 minutes) under RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)—potential litigation, inviting EM. Motion approved and off they go.

2:31:35—They return.

CB—Candor is good.

AH—Yep. And I get so upset and frustrated at hypocrisy.

Commissioners chat about passwords. Also, CB has seen a program on the History Channel about writing the Constitution. He recommends it to all.

AH—Anything else?

JN—Nope.

Adjourned at 11:36 until 1:30.

CB chats with LJ before he leaves for lunch. He realizes that the housing summit is being held at the casino and decided to go to that instead of attending the afternoon session.

2:51:05—Quarterly Finance Committee meeting with Pam Johnson (County Treasurer) and Cari Hall (County Auditor).

PJ—We’ve got a revised Summer 2023 cash on hand amount. Fund 125 (Parks & Recreation) had a transfer done twice—once in October and once in November. \$98,000. We didn’t notice it until January.

AH—So we’re \$98,000 to the good? Great!

AH—We’ve got \$2,900,000 in current expenses. That’s pretty good for this time of year, isn’t it?

PJ—Yes. It’s about average for right now. We’re doing pretty good.

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PJ—Investment interest is about 5.5%. Interest rates are going down probably, maybe a drop of .75 basis points. It's still pretty good.

AH—We estimated interest earnings pretty conservatively.

PJ—Plus some of our money is in CDs that won't mature until early 2025.

AH—Estimate interest earnings are \$1,200,000.

CH—Just as a reminder, we tend to over-target because some departments have one-time big expenditures in the first part of the year.

2:58:55—PJ—If there aren't more questions about this, CH and I met with EM and we discussed the Water Conservancy Board and the state Auditor's Office. There's nothing that says we have to be doing any other stuff. They make their own payments, etc.

CH—They make annual reports so the state Auditor audits them.

AH—The fees should cover their expenses, so we shouldn't be giving them money. They'll have to charge what they have to charge to cover the expenses.

CH—We do recommend the 139 Fund (for the Water Conservancy Board) be closed. They're not supposed to be part of us. We can close it with a resolution.

LJ—If the commissioners wanted to contribute to that board, would it be set up in Non-departmental, like Meals on Wheels are?

CH explains the procedure to close Fund 139.

AH—So the bond fund has to be all spent by April of next year?

CH—Yes.

AH—What if we don't?

PJ—I can ask (*inedible*).

AH asks LJ—Where are we with the utilities at the site? Do they have to do a redesign or can we go out for bids.

LJ—I asked MJ Neal and they're still working on it. But I think utilities are on hold.

AH—Mike (Worden) is working on the Coroner's building right now.

LJ—How much is there to spend?

PJ—At the end of February, we had \$5,112,300.

AH—Out of \$10,000,000. And the shops in Tonasket and Twisp are about done.

AH—We've got to spend it fast. We were ready to go with the bids but they came in way higher than we thought it would. Took a while to rebid and they still came in higher.

3:10:30—CH—I said I'd follow up with you guys after the election about how it went with the remodel. It went spectacularly. We don't need near as much remodeling. We'd like to keep the new room for elections processing and keep licensing where it is now. The staff likes it. The signature checkers like to have more room.

AH to LJ—We need an update from Tim about installing the glass.

LJ calls Tim. He'll be right up.

CH—We've paid for the glass. Whatever I don't spend in the Elections Reserve Account by June 30, I have to send back. We can close down a few days after April if we have to.

CH and AH talk about how accurate their budget projections have been. That pleases them.

AH to TM—The grant runs out in June, so we've got to have everything paid for by then.

TM—I'll talk to Rich this week and see if we can do that work in the end of April. We might have to work on some weekends, too.

AH—So all we have to do in authorize overtime.

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CH—There's a week in May when we could shut down, but they could work after closing time or weekends. And if there's enough notice, we could be closed half a day.

AH—I move to authorize OT for installation of glass & the countertop in the Auditor's Office. Motion passes.

TM leaves.

AH—Contracts went through with the Sheriff's Office and the non-commissioned with a little bit of retro-pay. Can you email me when you'll be able to get that money into the pay checks?

CH—It should be the first check in April

AH—Also, our current expense reserve will be down to nothing.

CH—Current expense reserve is down to nothing???

AH—Oh, I meant contingency reserve. Sorry.

PJ and CH—Whew.

Discussion about need of budget supplementals to do the retro, and the actual raises.

AH—I think that's all.

Adjourn for the day at 2:05.