

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, March 11, 2024 AM & PM

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
JL—Jim Lanthrup, commenter
ES—Emily Sisson, commenter
SK—Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management
NB—Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
CF—Casey Frangipane—CGI Digital
MW—Mike Worden, Okanogan County Dispatch Center
LG—Larry Gilman, County Assessor
DY—Dave Yarnell, Undersheriff
PB—Paul Budrow, Okanogan County Sheriff

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:

- Commissioners hear about a property tax issue with a retired orchardist. Later they discuss the situation with Larry Gilman, County Assessor, who tells them that the man is ineligible for the Open Space tax rate.
- Shelley Keitzman, of Human Resources, introduces Nick Bates, the new Fairgrounds Manager. He says he's had experience before with fairgrounds that have not been maintained well.
- Commissioners hear a proposal from CGI Video Tours to update their five year old video, introducing people to the county.
- The commissioners and the Sheriff discuss lowering the speed limit on the road that runs past the two schools in the Methow Valley School District.
- Meeting adjourns at 2:20.

03:55—Pledge of Allegiance.

JN—At Thursday's Fair Advisory Committee (FAC) meeting, they approved Whitney Wilson repairing the floor on the little Beef Barn. Do we have to approve it formally?

AH—If it's our total donation, yes. We need to make it clear that it's being done by donated work so we have no contractual or purchasing requirements that go along. Is everyone on board with that?

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JN—There weren't any comments.

AH—The concrete needs to be finished with a heavy brush.

JN—Don't know the exact plans.

15:05—CB—I had a call about a wolf sighting last week in the Monse area. West side of Hwy 97. I called Brock (?) and he'll send a conflict specialist out. Apparently they see two of them regularly.

AH—If something happened in that area, all Hell would break loose.

CB—They're coming through to the river.

CB—The caller was calling about her daughter who walks her guide dog and she's a little scared of walking the dog.

Discussion of wolf deterrence issues, especially in areas with dogs.

18:50—JN—It's 9:15 and time for public comment.

JL—I'm Jim Lanthrup and I own an orchard. I have a problem with the County Assessor about Open Space. I have three tax areas. I bought an orchard after I retired and also had alfalfa. I signed an Open Space contract. But now I'm being asked to pay a penalty for 7 years. The assessor says if I can find someone to lease the irrigated property, I'd only have to pay the penalty for the non-irrigated properties, such as driveways, my home, sagebrush, etc. The penalty is \$25,000 if I can't lease the property to someone to grow hay.

Commissioners discuss the situation with JL. They say they're meeting with the Assessor at 1:30 and hope to get JL some answers.

ES makes a comment via the Zoom chat box, asking about progress in moving the clock to the opposite wall of the commissioners' hearing room. AH responds that Tim has said he'd move the clock. Cam adds that the current clock isn't keeping time accurately and the office will buy two new clocks and put one in the current clock's position and the other for the opposite wall.

35:20—SK—Good morning. I'm Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Manager. With me is Nick Bates, the new Fairgrounds Facility Manager. This is his second day. It's a good sign that he came back after his first day. JN will meet with him at noon about what's going on at the Fairgrounds. He'll also meet with Mike Egerton to get caught up on what's going on with the FAC. Any comments, Nick?

NB—I've been trying to get access to the files of Mr. Ford (former Fairgrounds Manager) and they're working on that. I walked the Fairgrounds and I thought about Mr. Hover's comment of "Good Luck!". I've faced this before. Twenty or thirty years ago, Skagit County planned to move the fair so there was no maintenance. And they still haven't moved it. I've moved buildings from red and yellow to green before. I haven't been through all the buildings yet. Today I'm supposed to get keys to everything and look at it. And it's not all on you guys. It took a long time for it to get like this.

AH—We've put in close to \$2,000,000 in the last few years. State grants and a match. The new arena, racetrack railings and bleachers.

SK—He knows about that.

AH—CB wrote a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an engineer to do the water assessment up there. Discussion of water issues at the fairgrounds, need for irrigation well and domestic wells.

CB—The RFQ is to assess the system and what to do about it. There's also a cross-connection evaluation describes the system pretty well. That's an official compliance report.

NB—I've looked at some of that.

SK—The employment contract will be on the consent agenda.

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43:15—JN—Maurice?

MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management.

MG—Snow pack is at 39%. (AH had asked about snow pack data last week.)

MG—Next week I'm going to Ellensburg for a class about Search and Rescue.

Discussion of someone in a new position who deals with both emergency management and public health. The new person is working out well.

JN—There was a rock slide?

MG—It's ongoing. In the Aeneas Valley. It's a Forest Service road and it's quicker to get to the site via Ferry County. It's been happening for months.

CB—Someone asked me who's accountable for Shell Rock Point. It's eroding and the caller wondered if anyone was paying attention. I called the DOT and Wade DeTillian because he's the guy who knows about this stuff and he's going to follow up. But maybe Omak has the responsibility. Can you find out?

JN—I'll ask at OCOG (Okanogan Council of Governments) because the DOT will be there, too.

CB—Have you followed up about your concern about where you're storing your stuff?

MG—I'm working on it. The sandbags are the big issue. All the other stuff I'll be able to find a place for.

CB—But we need to know where it's all being stored just in case you're somehow out of the picture.

JN—This isn't county business, but I'd like to congratulate all the winter sports teams in the county that did so well at the state finals.

Commissioners list the schools with teams that went to state finals in football, basketball, wrestling.

CB returns to the phone call about wolves. The wolf was in AH's district but the parcel is listed as CB's on the tax sifter map. Discussion of who should have responsibility for accuracy of information on the county's homepage.

57:05—CB—Also, I had a retreat with the MSRC (Municipal Services and Research Center) Board. I learned the most common user of MSRC is small jurisdictions—10,000 people or less. The director has been there 14 years and is retiring. They're looking for someone who knows the culture of the organization and who the users are. They're looking for someone familiar with every corner of the state. Maybe focus on the special districts and the annexation policy for each kind of district. Fire Districts especially need to know about annexation.

CB—Also we had a meeting for the steering committee for the Forest Health Collaborative. One guy from the DNR was going to complain about turnover in the Forest Service. People are moved to new jobs frequently and it slows down everything. Before we got to that agenda item, a Forest Service person announced her re-location. I've asked Newhouse about it. He gets it but what they'll do about it is another thing.

Discussion of contract for providing Tonasket with police services. AH says the contract needs to be changed.

1:18:15—JN—Remind me when we have to have the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) money allocated?

AH—I put it on the calendar. It's set for June sometime. It has to be allocated by the end of the year.

There are a lot of possibilities out there, so we can still make changes if we do it in June. Haven't heard about any of the rules changing. If nothing else, we can allocate it to the county.

AH—I saw a request for \$55,000, so we're right about at \$700,000 left.

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CB—Community Action has those needs. The request for the roof is \$150,000. Plus there's a shortfall in vouchers for putting people us. I think she'll make a formal request presentation. I told her I wasn't sure where we are with the ARPA money.

AH—If we pay for the roof, I want them to stay there for a certain number of years.

AH—The undersheriff says they have needs for equipment, too.

1:25:30—AH—The other thing we need to do is the Watershed addendum. We need an update about water usage every five years. We collect the data.

AH to CB—Where are we with the water bank?

CB—We need to pay the bill for the work being done. Also, Tyson Carlson has a letter of intent to submit to the DOE for a grant we need so that we can do the water bank. We agreed they'd submit the grant application. The letter of intent is... Then that paves the way for making the application through the Planning Department.

AH—Did we get a bill?

CB—We have several invoices. I think we pay them out of Planning's professional services budget.

AH—That budget should be enough to get through mid-year.

CB—We're operating under the assumption that the grant is available to us. We continue to meet regularly with the district and work our way through the details of how the water bank operates.

CB—What about reporting requirements?

AH—We need to report what projects were implemented and how much water did you use in the five year timeframe.

AH—I was thinking about the comments (on the rezone?) on the well fee. It's \$500 and in the RCW, but I can't find it in the plan, when the fee gets modified. We collect the fee during the planning process.

AH and CB discuss the fee.

1:34:30—JN—It's 10:30. Casey Frangipane of CGI Video Tours via zoom.

CF and Commissioners discuss a proposed new video tour of Okanogan County. Five years ago CGI produced a video tour of the county, and the contract for that is about to expire. They talk about what may be included in the new video and how much footage from the older video can be reused. CGI and the BOCC will revisit this issue in April. CF leaves the meeting.

1:54:45—CB—She talked about quality of life and parks and recreations stuff. What kind of support do we need to attract people in the medical field and law enforcement to the area? Parks and recreation are important for that. Wenatchee has used its outdoor recreation attractions to attract people they need. But also she talks about non-profits and community organizations. Knowing that there are a lot of them and there's the opportunity to participate in them may be another thing to draw people we need to the county. People looking at jobs here might want to know about community involvement. If we want to make the county an attractive place to live, who are we trying to make it attractive to?

JN—There's a fine line with community involvement and does it fit in with the community they're moving to.

CB—We had the conversation today about Fire Districts today. What are people looking for in rural areas? Are they trying to get away from Seattle rules?

JN—On Realtor.com they have a fire danger map now.

CB—So we have to be sensitive to that. Tell them about the Wildfire Protection Plan in progress. If we announced we didn't have any building permits, some would like it, but some wouldn't want to deal with that. Who are we attracting and why?

JN—The thing with building permits is that it's hard to get financing, or even just insurance, without one.

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203:50—Cam—Sheriff Budrow will come in at 2:00. He says he has two questions to ask.

Discussion among commissioners and Cam about what kind of pizza should be ordered for an upcoming event. AH had deep-fried pickle chips once and liked them. He thinks they would be good on pizza.

2:10:00—JN to CB—Are you aware of a document called Goals 2000, done in the late 1980s? It's a guideline of the Okanogan County lifestyle and how you could live maybe without fully complying with some of the state regulations.

CB—I don't recall it. But that's what drives comprehensive plans.

JN—Along those lines, I had a good chat with Arnie (?). He suggested we use the Okanogan tribe to battle with the Yakamas.

CB—I know exactly what his feelings are, but I don't think that's the way to go. In the last steering committee of the Forest Health Collaborative, the tribes have been considered a member but haven't participated. The Yakamas have always participated a lot because we're talking about the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forest, which they see as ceded territories. The Colvilles take exception to that. Just recently the Colvilles wanted to participate again. We thought we didn't want to turn them away by process. So now they're participants. The biggest hurdle to decide to be a part of it was that the Yakamas were at the table and they didn't think they should be.

CB—In the Tri-Cities area where the Colville Tribes have established a business, the Yakamas are opposed to that. I think it's best not to be in the middle of that. There are things to work out with treaties. I think it would cause us grief as a county to get involved.

JN—With the Yakama Nation, the council shifts frequently and it's hard to get things done.

CB—The council has 14 members all serving two year terms. Seven are up for re-election every year. But everybody gets a chance.

Discussion about the road issue (talked about in last week's BOCC meeting?).

2:34:10—MW—I'm Mike Worden with the Dispatch Center of the Okanogan County Sheriff's Office. I put out a bid for a service van for the new radio technician position. We got one response. I used the formal bid process per the latest policy.

MW—From Wendle Ford in Spokane, with tax the bid is for \$71,321.58. Looks like they signed and did the paperwork appropriately.

JN—When was the bid deadline?

MW—Today at 10:00. I'll look at the bid specs and be back tomorrow with a recommendation. Thanks.

MW—There's a state bid, too, that rounds up to \$65,000 assuming the features are comparable, but delivery is 4-6 months out.

AH explains the formal bid process is required for goods over \$50,000. We used to buy all our vehicles for less than that, but now they're all more expensive than \$50,000. Josh (Thomson, County Engineer) says new rules are coming for purchasing things for Public Works.

JN—Adjourn for lunch at 11:39.

2:49:04—JN to LG—We're ready when you are.

LG—I'm Larry Gilman, County Assessor.

LG—I asked for the meeting after learning what the remaining ARPA funds could be used for. I sat through several sales pitches and this caught my attention. It's a one-time cost. You give them your aerial photography, your GIS and all your sketches. They convert the sketches to a format for esri and

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size them to a house on the aerial photos. The whole idea is to find missed items. It was a good presentation. It's approx. 95¢/sketch and we have 26,300 sketches, but a lot are mobile homes. They catch 1/3 with no discrepancy, 1/3 with a small discrepancy and 1/3 with a major discrepancy. But they're not in Washington State yet. After thinking about it, I wondered if it would save us \$26,000. LG describes how they do assessments for buildings where the owner won't allow access. The law says they have to inspect every parcel, but if there is no access, they use aerial photos.

LG—Unless you want me to pursue it, I won't. I'd rather have them do other counties first so we're not the beta county.

AH—No. We don't want to be the first.

2:55:35—JN—While you're here, we had a gentleman in this morning, James Lanthrop and he had a hard time explaining his problem.

LG—He's in Current Use Agriculture and there's a sale going down. First thing—it was an orchard and he's removed all of the trees from the property. If he was going to sell and remain in the program, he'd have to put in so hay or something to keep it as Current Use Agriculture.

AH—Tell them about the sagebrush portion of it.

LG—In the sale of it, Washington says you have to be a qualifying agriculturist to be in the program. To qualify, you have to be in agriculture for 3 of the last 5 years. That's been the law since 1971—the Open Space and Taxation Act. He could stay in the program if he leases the land to someone who grows hay or something. But I'd only allow the irrigated land to remain in the program. The hills with sagebrush shouldn't have been in anyway. We're trying to preserve agriculture and irrigation by getting leases for the ground.

LG—The way it works—if we wasn't selling the property and wasn't doing anything with the property, I'd proceed with the removal until Dec. 31 for him to convert it. If he didn't convert it, I'd do an administrative removal of the property.

LG—In a sale, or partial removal if they get a lease, they'd pay out of the sale price. It'd be part of the closing costs. It's up to seven years back taxes. It's painful to pay at the time of sale, but less painful than paying without having the proceeds of the sale. If someone is out of compliance, it's a tax deferral, not a tax exemption. Somebody owes the taxes if someone's out of compliance.

AH—If I'm selling it as a farm to a farmer, how do I avoid the back taxes.

LG—In a transfer, there's a checkbox. And you have to get an affidavit signed and notarized.

Discussion of the state law. LG says farming has changed so much since the law was passed, the law should be reworked.

LG—I'm encouraging him to get a lease, but even if he did, it wouldn't apply to the sagebrush.

CB—He made his deal before he understood the back taxes situation.

LG—Plus there's compounding interest, too.

CB—When those issues come up and people appeal the decision, where do they go.

LG—To the Board of Equalization, and then the state if they lose at the Board and still want to appeal.

LG—I just learned about a whole bunch of properties in 9-Mile in Current Use Agriculture that don't qualify. There's a sale involved.

AH—We probably shouldn't push to change the law even though it could produce more revenue for the County. We're trying to preserve agriculture.

LG—It would drive revenue for the County. But there's also "equal taxes for everybody".

LG—Thanks for your time.

LG—There are two companies are working on Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal, and we're talking to them tomorrow. Pam (Johnson, County Treasurer) and I are meeting with them.

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CB—The letter of intent was sent for the water banking. We're operating under the existing contract with Aspect now.

CB—We talked about the Sullivan water right? Lake Sullivan in Pend Oreille County. OCR (Office of the Columbia River, an office in the Washington State DOE) had purchased it and it can be used along the Columbia. Brewster and Pateros on up.

AH—There are a lot of fields along the other side of the river that were once irrigated but not now. I don't know what the situation is.

CB—They put my name of the application, and the application is ready to sign. It's for the Pine Creek and Sullivan Lake water rights both.

3:20:10—DY—The Sheriff is on his way. I brought one of the three quotes. It's not what we're here to talk about, but you wanted it. We're working on getting the other two quotes ready.

DY—He called this meeting for the OT and hiring bonus? I think that's what it's for.

Discussion of bids for rifles, shotguns and pistols. They're for special response team deputies.

PB—I apologize I'm late. The MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) were signed for the bonus and we'd like to fund it from a funded but unfilled position.

AH—So all you need to do is do a budget amendment. It shouldn't need a public hearing.

PB—Another thing that's come up is Twin Lakes Rd that runs past the schools. It's a 50 mph zone. We can't enforce the "20 mph when children are present" law because the children have to be on sidewalks or in a crosswalk and there aren't crosswalks or sidewalks there.

AH—So we could do a speed limit change for different times of day.

PB—Like 35 mph.

AH—I drive that stretch of road a lot. We could do it like 35 mph between 7:30 to 8:30 and also in the afternoon. I don't think we need a speed study. I'll ask Josh.

PB—That's all I have.

CB—There are questions being asked about the decrease in dog impound options.

PB—When I go to a public meeting or town council meeting I bring up the idea of a county-wide Animal Control Officer (ACO) and an overarching ordinance we'd adopt.

AH—But what about places to take a dog for impound.

PB—One folded, but it looks like it's back in operation. There's another one, but that's all.

DY—I'll get the other two quotes when they came in.

Discussion of less lethal shotguns.

JN—You might want to reach out to the school district and see what times they'd suggest.

AH—Good idea. Just go talk to the principal. You're thinking 35 mph will be OK?

DY and PB leave.

3:35:30—AH—So, I think the guys will be about \$100,000 to \$125,000 range. We've got \$110,000 left in the LATCF (Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund) we could appropriate and take the rest out of ARPA.

JN—I'm fine with that.

AH—Or we can take it all out of the ARPA money. We have the Action Council roof. We'd have that money and the LATCF money if the HVAC goes out or something.

CB—Maybe the roof could be paid by a CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) grant.

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AH—But I'd like to get the ARPA money allocated by June or so.

Meeting adjourns at 2:20