

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday April 11, 2023 AM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC Chair, District 1 (On Zoom)

Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2

Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC, District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ) – Clerk of the Board

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer via Zoom. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://countywatch.org> and are not the official county record of the meeting. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later date, see:

https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php.

Time stamps below are in real time. To locate specific topics, a click on the AV Capture video screen at <https://okanogancounty.org/avcapture.html> can assist in finding the correct spot on the video recording.

Significant Discussions or Actions:

- Cortner(contractor)on site today to locate utilities for the Justice Building;
- Discussion regarding letter/action together with the Eastern Wa Council of Governments regarding breeching of the Snake River Dams – concern about commerce;
- Management of threatened Wildlife Species due to 'fractured landscape';
- Discussion of partnership with Conservation District, Methow Watershed Council and others for Water Bank – need to re-write the water code;
- Update from Methow Watershed Council;
- Discussion/Review Voluntary Stewardship Work Group – have received 6 applications that need to be appointed by BOCC – previous resolution directs Planning Director to run this group – may require some changes,
- Andy Hover to represent BOCC on North Cascades Interagency Committee on Grizzlies,
- Details for updating contracts with Extension Service and Noxious Weed office space;
- Public Works: 4 day road closure for work on Twisp Transfer station, Behind schedule on Shop Construction – hope to have them ready for use by November,
- Adjourn 11:42.

9:08

JN & AH discuss problems with Zoom account deleting meeting. Would like to consider adding a new Zoom account. AH asks CB what he thinks about setting up a new Zoom account. CB says yes, for sure, if it makes things more efficient. CB reports that he has an appointment this morning at 11:00 this morning. CB also talked about the big loss in Albert Roberts' accidental death last Sunday. This is devastating to his Family and the County. Albert was a very active member of the community with the Conservation District, Planning Commission, and other activities. He will be sorely missed.

9:19

LJ reports that the Department of Commerce has a different way to apply for grants now. She has reached out to Community Action as these are grants, they usually apply for.

LJ reports that Cortner Architecture will be on site today to locate the utilities for the Justice Building. BOCC has not made changes for Cortner yet, but there will be some changes.

LJ reports on letter from Okanogan County Council of Governments (OCOG) regarding document for County to Eastern Washington Council of Governments regarding breaching of the Snake River Dams. AH states that if you two (other BOCC members) can read the letters, let's take some action on it. AH doesn't like the breaching idea. He feels it is not well thought out, especially given the rush for electrification. CB asks where are the authorities for the dam breaching? AH states that this idea has been going on for eons and he believes it will be an 'act of congress' to get this done.

9:23

AH states it would be good to get the Lower Snake River Recovery Board information. They have, apparently, completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Right now, there are roads and rails right to the river. AH to get more information. CB states that he thinks we should demand to know the process in place and how they plan on dealing commodities that are being moved by barge. CB wants to talk with the people who are in favor of breaching the dams *for a clearer understanding*.

9:25

CB is reminded of the mining operations that were on the table before. AH states he agrees with CB, like when people were commenting on the Grizzly Bear Re-Introduction.

9:30

AH – *For instance*, it is frustrating with the Park Service, who is asking the Forest Service about trail use, rather than include us. The NCW initiative has given funding for the infrastructure and there are a lot more parts to the process that need to be in place.

CB – They are not perfect, and we have an opportunity to make this correct.

AH – To show you the hypocrisy, you should watch the Spring Bear Season Commission.

JN notes lack of transparency.

9:34

AH notes that in re-introducing species, you need to get 2 breeding pairs. (*Discussing the wolf situation*) We now have a massive influx in the northeast of the state.

CB comments that maybe our approach to managing species is not correct. You could say we are playing God. There is a lot of talk about the 'fractured landscape' for wildlife. CB also states that some animals simply do not fit in a developed landscape. AH reports 'All these people saying we need the animals' so are endangered species...

CB – Anyway, it's a bigger discussion.

9:39

LJ reports that the Okanogan Community Homeless Shelter people would like support for an amendment to their contract. We do need a purchase order per LJ – she has drafted an amendment once we have a quote/list of materials.

AH reports the Methow Watershed Council is having a difficult time getting in to Zoom...

More communication: Dave Mullen would like some time to talk with the BOCC about EMS in the North County. CB asks what is his goal? LJ is unsure. JN states that he is still attempting to get 24/7 EMS coverage in the North County.

CB states if there is a proposal for coverage that we need to consider, we will need more information from Dave Mullen.

9:43

(Members of the Methow Watershed Council have been able to get into the meeting; Sarah Lane, Craig McDonald, and Jean Bodeau.)

9:45

AH talks about the partnership the County has with the Conservation District for consideration of a Water Bank. We will, however, need to re-write the water code. CB states that the Conservation District is working on the Water Main Issue. AH – we need to get set up in this water work but will need a consultant for the work we need to do. Jean Bodeau (JB) from the Methow Watershed Council gives some background on the organization that was formed in 1976. Current officers have been on the Council for a year. Historically, Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) has been the largest purveyor of water in the Methow Valley per AH.

JB updates the BOCC on their current projects: 1) Drought emergency planning. We plan to identify and apply for grants. 2) Water banking with the Conservation District and County. We are planning a public forum to educate folks regarding this idea. 3) Water needed for affordable housing 4) Outreach and education – convene forums regarding drought resilience. We have other presentations coming up; Water rights for one. We're also organizing a roundtable with irrigators and are looking for a well-rounded conversation between users. AH states that the County is the 9th seat on the Watershed Council. Describes the relationship between the MWC activities and its relevance to the County. Discussion of the specifics of the contract, 1,650.00/month, 2 yr. contract, \$19,800/yr. Independent contractor relationship. Funds community outreach education activities, Planning Director administers the contract. The contract comes up for renewal at the end of this year. Funds are taken from the water quality fund, finite amount of money. CB – we are looking at future revenue sources besides the water quality fund. AH state that we need to find other funding source – not for the next 2 yrs., we should put that on agenda for another day. Sarah Lane from the Watershed Council reports that they are actively seeking grants through the Watershed Council Foundation and continue to look for more sources. The MWC uses the grant money first, before using County funding. We have used \$11,400.00 of previous monies from County. Jean Bodeau reports that the primary purpose of this time with the BOCC was much like a meet (Cmr. Neal & greet). CB expresses his support for the MWC work.

10:15

Justin Stanley (JS) and Craig Nelson (CN) of the Okanogan Conservation District in to discuss/Review Voluntary Stewardship Work Group applications. JS reports there are 6 applications so far, but we need 9 altogether. Some people need to leave the group and be replaced. JS is trying to get someone from the Methow and the Colville Tribe. JS sent applications to the BOCC last week but brought hard copy with him. We have a pretty good idea where they could be appointed to. It would be really nice if we could get them appointed by the end of the month.

AH states that they look like a well-rounded group. JS states they are looking for someone to replace Dick Ewing from the Farm Bureau.

CN notes that JS has been spending a lot of time on this.

LJ notes that a previous resolution directs the Planning Director to run this group. AH states this was made a planning function by previous Planning Director, Perry Huston.

CN states we have a workers meeting for the end of this month, that is why we're looking for the new appointees by this meeting. The next meeting won't be until July.

Regarding Conservation District's role in this group, CN state that we are the Technical Service Provider. The grant comes from the County. AH – the BOCC needs to appoint members.

CN also suggest staggering appointments to make it easier to replace members, when needed. Differing time limits would be good.

AH brings up the Water bank details with the Conservation Staff.

CN states that we are lucky to have 2 large watersheds to ourselves. This is different from most counties. Also, the County can purchase water rights to add to the water bank and of course, this will need to go to DOE (Dept of Ecology) We will need to set out MOU's AH believes there will be different objectives in different areas of the County. CN notes there will be junior water right users in the Okanogan Valley. CN – we struggle with riparian areas.

10:38

CN = things will need to be set out, like fire mitigation, for example. We also have a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

Continues to discuss other programs available through Conservation District.

10:45

North Cascades Interagency Commission of the Grizzly is meeting. AH would like to represent the BOCC. Moved, Seconded, and Carried to have AH represent the BOCC on this Commission.

10:54

CB reports that the BOCC is being approached about the DD (Developmentally Disabled) monies that go through OBHC and wonders if the County would like to contract with another group also.

LJ reports that we are currently contracted with OBHC, and we are also contracted with the the State. CB's concern is that people are getting served. AH also states this is an important consideration.

LJ states it is the responsibility of the County to be sure these services are provided. She gave the history of Okanogan County Mental Health Services before it became OBHC.

10:58

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer and Nicole (staffmember) from Public Works.

Also, on Zoom is Kayla _? from the WSU Extension Office. It is time to renew the contracts for the Extension Service and Noxious Weed. *There is considerable discussion regarding who is on the lease, who has liability responsibility, and whether to go forward on the new lease agreement as done before. The Extension Office shares space with the Noxious Weed people.*

CB left at 11:00, leaving AH and JN to finish BOCC meeting.

JT would like to just extend the agreement but doesn't know if more needs to be added. It was originally a 1-year control, but we're updating to a 5 year contract. - 68 months.

11:10

It was Moved, Seconded, and Carried to authorize JT to sign the agreement. JT also notes that the BOCC signatures are needed.

There was some budgeting discussion regarding Extension and Noxious Weed.

11:15

JT notes that he is also working on Auditors Space contracts and the Public Health

11:16

JT updates on Road & Maintenance; list of road restrictions is really small now. The Mag/Chloride application to dirt roads will begin next Tuesday.

Regarding the Planning/Trails position, liability insurance is getting completed so moving along.

Discussed the Park & Recreation budget line #125. This has been for the Snow Parks. May need new, specific budget line for this position.

JT states the need for an MOU with OCOG – everything is moving forward. Just the determination of how to fund.

AH Paths, Trails, Recreation – there has to be some responsibility for it.

JT states the goal is to look for other funding – part of the duties of the position.

Upcoming Public Works Projects;

The bidder on the Old Hwy 97 Project wants to start in May

Guard Rail projects to begin. The Twisp Transfer Station project with 4 day road closure. AH suggests notifying the lumber companies in the Methow.

11:25

JT reports construction on Shops are getting off to a slow start – hoping they will be usable by November.

JT reminds the BOCC that he will be in Alabama next week for a conference.

There will be a bid opening next week, handled by Shasta Stedman. JT reports that Ken Kovalchenko, Solid Waste, has 6 projects going on. JT notes that there is a weird thing with state-funded projects that need to pass the NCTI(?)

JT also reports the Overlay Project may not be reimbursed. JT is waiting for the Local Projects guy that he helped hire. JT to contact him.

Public Works has some items on the Consent Agenda.

JT also talks about the problem Cortner to have finding utilities for the Justice Center.

JN, AH, & LJ discuss what is coming up in the PM session – the Board of Equalization – and some other options. The BOE has some ideas, but the board required 3 members. There are only 2.

Adjourn at 11:42