

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday September 5th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
John Neil (JN), BOCC District 3
Laney Johns (LJ), Clerk of the Board
Dennis Rabidou (DR), Juvenile Court
Matt Marsh (MM), Tonasket Ranger District
Josh White (JW), Colville Ntl. Forest Supervisor

Time stamps refer to the time on the wall clock. An AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date is available at:
https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php

Summary of Important Discussions:

- *Resolution 117-2023 approved, ends the 40%-40% city-county split for .09 infrastructure fund spending*
- *Grant-funded stipend to go to Juvenile Court Administrative Services Manager to continue addition work necessary for County-U of W partnership regarding youth homelessness*
- *Tonasket Ranger District report covers*
 - *Charter Cr. fire, now winding down, most Pasayten closures ending by this weekend*
 - *timber sales stewardship program with clause for road maintenance*
 - *possible marking of dead end roads, in reply to Commissioner Neil's question.*
 - *North Fork Salmon Cr. road work progresses; price upwards of \$1.7M*
 - *using local contractors vs. relying on county for emergencies; FS wants "emergency agreement" with County*
 - *recruiting for many sorts of full-time positions*

1:30 - LJ talks about a loud music complaint involving hundreds of people and host not having time to provide adequate notice to neighbors. Minutes and consent agenda approved.

1:40 - Someone comes in with the dimensions of the building to be moved from the old Forest Service building to the fairgrounds: 60'x20'. AH explains to JN that they want to compare this with the fairground buildings. Commissioners approve resolution 117-2023, a .09 tax dollars public infrastructure policy funding project, replacing the previous resolution 54-2008, which determined these funds would be split 40-40-20 between cities and counties, with a buffer for emerging opportunities. In a previous meeting they talked about not staying bound to this city-county split, as it might limit the scope of possible projects.

AH: We need to invite the cities, tell them we're going to make allocations of .09 dollars and need input.

LJ: We need to look at what we have currently.

AH: We have the bond payment coming out of them, and annual revenue, then money has been coming in from bond payments that's been suspended. Do we want to do it this year and ever third year following, do 80% of what's in the pot plus 20% for emerging opportunities?

LJ: Yes, and rescind 54-2008 since it's suspended right now.

They pass resolution 118-2023, allowing Superior Court employees to be paid with the same bars code. LJ announces she will be absent Monday September 18th, replaced by Cameron, a trainee. From JN's comments it appears Chrystal Hawley is now with the Okanogan County Organization of Governments (OCOG). At 1:54 they take a half hour recess.

2:26 - DR arrives, distributes the draft for a stipend proposal.

DR: In 2020 we partnered with the University of Washington regarding homelessness and our community partners. The grant was enough for our probation manager to be homeless youth coordinator, plus supplies and services for the homeless. Research got completed, there were good outcomes, they wanted to continue. They got more funding from the legislature, liked the partnership with Okanogan. We seemed to be more effective in our approaches... Now they're giving them a significant increase. Now it's \$127,000 for the next two years... They thought it would be appropriate for our administrative services manager to get a stipend because she does a lot of fill-in, data management. *AH asks about the other stipend, DR says it's for the probation manager-youth coordinator, who does assessments when kids come to court and determines if they qualify for the program.*

DR: It's very flexible funding... We paid for one youth to move back with his family in Alaska, and he's doing quite well.

AH: Before I say yes, could you outline how they are accomplishing what they want to accomplish?

DR (*a bit confused*): Sure.

AH: What's the scope of the grant?

DR: Section 4 might give you what you want. (*AR reads.*) There are *going to* ten courts in the state now, more might be coming on board, with research showing it's working. At first it was private funding, and really flexible. Now they've narrowed it down.

AH (*reads*): ...responsible for meeting all program outcome requirements...

DR: ...Then there's that larger state coordination too, (*They*) swap ideas, discussions...

AH: "Hiring of...staff, collecting HMIS data--"

DR: They're still tracking data they need for the Department of Commerce; funding is coming from them. Kathleen (*Descoteaux*), if she gets the stipend, will handle that .

JN: How many youth does this serve?

DR: ...This is early prevention from kids actually entering the system. I will get the numbers to you, at least 10 cases since 2020. Of course we had the pandemic too. A lot of kids are assessed. ...As they get in trouble and get into the system, they don't need (*homelessness*) in addition. They approve a safety plan. That's the real aim of this, to start removing the barriers that would create instability because that leads to the breaking of families. (2:40) *He mentions providing a toilet for an RV so one family now has a place to live.*

AH: So we've given a stipend based on a reimbursement grant. You're billing every month. *AH says he'll show the draft to Commissioner Branch the following Tuesday. DR will have the resolution ready.*

AH: Do you have something written down with the original scope of duties for the \$1,111 a month?

DR: She's been doing them all along, without the stipend. This is additional work but (*we didn't have the money before*). Data reporting and data collection. Basically grant management. (*He will include this in the resolution. He leaves.*)

2:54 - Tonasket Ranger District Report - MM arrives early ("*Gotta keep my boss on his toes*"), passes out the report. At 2:57 the forest supervisor arrives from Colville.

MM: I would like to introduce our new supervisor, Josh White.

JW: I've been acting in that capacity since the retirement of Rodney Smolden in June. My background: I've lived in Colville eight years, was district ranger in Kettle Falls, then deputy supervisor for over a year. I'm excited for the opportunity to stay in Eastern Washington and continue to do the work that Colville has really been trying to lead out on, and manage and take care of our forests, serve the people in and around public lands...

MM: As fire season progresses and, I hope, comes to an end soon, and we get end-of-season moistures and RHs and temperatures, and a little bit of rain, I'm just giving you a Fire Season Update, The Crater Creek Fire that came out of Canada two weeks ago Thursday had a wind on it... We couldn't safely get up there and assess it. That's where all the smoke came from. We had a small incident management team assigned to that as it came across the border. It's still active but (*less so*). We worked that team 12 days in conjunction with the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) and BLM (Bureau of Land Management) and had a lot of local resources. We only did 30 acres of active fire line on the border. The rest of the work was out in front with a contained/confined strategy. We hired a lot of the local loggers. We were doing that work in front because of the magnitude of that fire coming toward us, so we were re-activating old lines from Tripod, Snowy Mt., Newby. Had a lot of fire scars to work from, a lot of infrastructure, so we could just go over, re-scrape or move sticks. We were able to do that the last 12 days and just last week we (went down to) a small incident command team and a local Forest Service team. I'll get an update after this fire. We're monitoring it for public safety. Closures on the whole east side of the Pasayten Wilderness, Horseshoe Basin, the whole Loomis State Forest across the north end. The State has their closure on the NRCS (*Natural Resource Conservation Service*) so we're working (*with them*) to open up since it's a high-use area. As the 15th is high buck season that's a huge one in the County, the grouse, bear, deer... So we want to get these areas open, maybe this week. We'll either shrink (*the closure*) as best we can or just put good notices up (*that it's a fire area*).

JN: Basically everything near Toat's Coulee is just kind of shut down.

MM: I anticipate lifting that to some degree by the weekend. We got plenty of opportunity for wood-cutting elsewhere in that vicinity. Over the weekend we might have some campsites. Only two campgrounds closed: 14 Mile and Long Swamp.

That's the gist of our fire season so far. We've had some small fires but been able to catch them either in conjunction with State help or they've been high enough, lightning strike we've been able to get. Relatively it's been a more moderated season than we've had in years past. I'm working with Chris (*Furr*) in the Methow on the Crater Cr. Fire to open up as quickly as we can.

3:08 - MM brings up the subject of hiring local contractors, says he knows that the commissioners encourage this and they've made a "*diligent effort*".

MM: Within 24 hours we had two full logging sites up there with machinery we need to open those fire lines. We tried to spread out (*the contracts*) the best we could... *He said Grant's grocery store provided fire lunches but they had trouble finding places to serve 200 dinners.* People in Nespelem provided breakfasts and some dinners. AH will have the

Economic Alliance director contact him for food options. JW encourages the participation of an Okanogan commissioner in the Tri-County Economic Development District out of Colville; says they have contractor workshops...

AH: How's your infrastructure-funded sales?

MM: ...We can do stewardship items, so if we sell timber (*this way*) we can have road construction or maintenance as one part of the stewardship. The buyer would commit to doing that work.

JW: There are credits that go on the contract and then, instead of them just paying for the wood, it just sits in suspense until they do that. Salmon Creek (*road work*) was paid for with these, we call them retained receipts, and with Inflation Reduction Act... More than half a million to get that road up and operational and useable for ingress and egress for fire, and to be accessible.

JN: That leads us to another discussion: marking roads that are dead ends, in case of emergencies. Do you have a policy on that? MM says he's never seen a Forest Service-signed road that's a dead end. JW says if the number of the road is very long, it's probably not going very far.

MM: We could (*mark the dead ends*).

3:16 - JW: We wouldn't have to mark every one. MM repeats that the roads he oversees all go through, but should someone tell them about a dead end, "we would definitely entertain putting a sign up."

MM: To finish on roads, last time I told you we were planning to do work on North Fork Salmon Creek going to Salmon Meadows. We finished a portion of that contract, started grinding that today. It will go to the Forest Service-County line. We'll be able to grind it, shape it, so it doesn't tear your axle off.

AH: You're using the sealings to re-shape the road?

MM: Yes. And from Salmon Meadows up to Mutton Ridge, we just put \$1.7M into that... and a 4-6" over the whole. We looked for a local contractor but a Central WA contractor got it. (3:19) We've got our BPA, that's the list of contractors ready to go in the door...

AH: This happened here a year ago—you have an emergency mud slide and people trapped behind it and no fund source to pay for a contractor to go do that.

JW: We would mobilize it like a wildfire. Those in-between emergencies might take a little longer. We have some tools, maybe an emergency agreement.

AH: We don't want to do that. That's what happened before. Local contractors got upset because money was going to the County and not to them.

MM: ...The quickest response we had when North Fork blew out last spring was with the County. We need to have some flexibility to make it common sense because to always have to go to a contractor will be time. AH asks about a small works roster. MM says that's what the BPA is. We're working with that and looking at putting together an agreement with the County.. Our engineers are going to put together an agreement with your engineer, with just a little money. As it is now I can't (*hire someone*) right away, I have to get money. He says he only has \$2,500, and that the County has helped on a number of occasions, and any planned or long term work would go to a BPA list contractor. AH asks why doesn't he use them for an emergency. MM replies they would blow their entire fund on one contract; if they just need to be lent a tractor as in the N. Fork case... the County billed them but not a large amount.

JW: We could get caught up in our billing mechanism. An idea that's been floating around in other places: We would contract with the counties to manage that contract work.

3:26 - AH: It's a double edged sword. The goal is that everybody has a chance to do work. These guys are paying (*roads*) taxes that are then being used to take work away from them. That's a complaint I've heard.

JS: We'll have a booth at the fair, complete with Smokey, print-outs with fuels accomplishments and restorative messaging, with our sales and fuels work to help with this wildfire crisis we're all in.

3:29 - Timber Sale Update - MM: There are still active sales on Mt. Hull but it's winding down, hopefully they'll have burns in the fall. *MM explains the map he gave the commissioners of properties formerly belonging to big timber interests like Biles Coleman whose owners call him to complain about the state of the roads.* I've talked with Josh (*Thomsen, County Engineer*) about this. I know the County is not going to take care of a road that's not up to standard but this is a road—(*he shows how most of it is on FS land*)—we won't get up here for years, because of our...20 year plan. To better serve landowners I would recommend turning over some of these FS roads to become county roads. This is not a decision we're going to make today but I wanted to get the discussion going.

AH: As long as there are no bridges! (*Laughter.*)

3:31 - MM: Quad County has semi-monthly meetings. *He suggests one of them sitting in the video conference.*

JW: People bring their concerns to the commissioners. That group was beneficial to us for motorized recreation, (*they are looking at*) ways for project planning with citizens... *He knows they are busy but could there be one commissioner from each of the four counties at these meetings? MM will send them the Zoom link.*

MM: I've started recruiting positions from forester to engineer to wildlife biologist to firefighter. Not just temporary. *MM and AH commiserate about the difficulty to find hard-working, qualified help.*

JW: We're going to hire half as many temporary workers. It's an opportunity to target kids out of high school who don't want to go to college. It's a real job with benefits. *MM talks about working with Oroville schools. AH suggests the Independent Learning Center in the Methow.*

MM: I've reached the end of my list. *He asks about Commissioner Branch. AH says h'es on a short vacation in Portland.*

3:42 - *MM and JW leave. LJ says they'll be interviewing for an administrative secretary, asks them if they'll go to the fair. AH says possibly, JN says Thursday and Saturday.*

3:44 - *Meeting adjourned.*