

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday June 27, 2023 AM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC Chair, District 1

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 time, see:

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

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

Summary of Significant Discussions or Actions: Prosecuting Attorney in requesting additional staff to handle the numerous appeals and to help with Civil cases, makes case due workload and upcoming workload based on the new drug laws. Public Comment: Ruth Hall has questions about road vacation in the plat of Monse. Executive Director of Economic Alliance and other Broadband Action Team (BAT) report on current status of broadband project to get reliable internet access to all people in the County – also working on Internet Equity for covered populations. No BOCC meeting on Wednesday, Newly appointed Board of Equalization member resigns leaving opening for District 1, 11:32 Recessed until afternoon session.

8:23

Flag salute and opened the meeting. Superior Court staff did not show for their 8:15 update.

Began with some fairly inaudible conversation regarding the \$50,000 opioid settlement.

8:32

AH requested to go into a closed session to discuss union negotiations with Shelley Keitzman, HR.

Moved, Seconded, and Carried to go into closed session for 15 minutes. *Session went another 15 minutes.*

9:12

Albert Lin (AL), Prosecuting Attorney requesting one additional staff to help with appeals and civil cases. AL reports there are 7 deputies, 1 Chief Criminal Deputy, 1 Chief Civil Deputy, and himself. There have been some very significant serious violent crimes tried (murder, assault, rape) that are all being appealed. Cases are coming back that are over 10 years old. AL is also worried about when the new drug law comes into effect in August. When this law was created, there was no money allocated for Prosecutors.

AL feels that he is constantly reviewing caseloads to be sure this request is needed.

CB asks what has changed? I understand if more cases are found guilty, there will be more appeals.

AL states that criminal cases are my main focus and thinks the BOCC should recall when he was

appointed he had been the civil deputy. Now, based on a year's reflection with the new drug laws and no resources for Prosecutors, we will continue to prioritize by the needs of the county. Violent crimes are highest priority, then property crimes. With property crimes, there is usually substance use.

AL – I just am asking you all for help. There are a number of serious cases that are appealing, and they are 'papering' us to death. Another example of something increasing workload, US Supreme Court is looking at Youthful Offenders differently. We have successfully argued cases in the Superior Court but need to go back and review.

9:22

CB states that he is at the approval stage. AH states yes, as long as it is used wisely. CB states that crime is one of our top priorities.

JN is concerned with financial sustainability. CB states, again, that we want to make sure we address the crime issues in the county.

- 1) AL states that he thinks one new staff is reasonable but could use 2. Will see how this position goes and then, may have to come back to you.

AH moves to have AL work with the Human Resources staff to write up the position, job description and resolution for this new position. This was seconded, and carried.

9:35

BOCC goes over proceedings for June 5 & 6 and June 12 & 13, also June 20.

9:39

Moved, Seconded, and Carried to approve June 5 & 6.

10:01

Roni Holder-Diefenbach (RHD), Executive Director for Economic Alliance, along with Kayla Wells (KW), WSU Extension, and Greg Mendoza? (GM) -Okanogan County Electric Cooperative (OCEC); all members of the Broadband Action Team (BAT) working on project to bring Broadband internet to all of Okanogan County.

GM begins the discussion by explaining the Okanogan County Electrical Cooperative (OCEC). There are 4,000 meters on this power plan (formerly REA). They have 15 staff. GM found that cooperative broadband fits into their mission. Other areas are doing cooperative broadband also. At first, he learned it was going to cost 30 million dollars to do what is needed and they could not afford this. They have \$16 Million in Assets. They sent out a survey to their customers who came back with a very favorable response, then they applied for ARPA funds. We determined we could do the project for \$13.2 million. We applied for \$12 Million in a grant and we have been awarded this.

RHD also prompts that one of the challenges was OCEC board was not willing to go for the Broadband but after receiving the funding and other encouragement, they came together and now support the project. RHD states that the BAT group meets 2X monthly. We are starting to see infrastructure that is giving service where there previously wasn't. She sees a split of 500 for OCEC and 500 for Okanogan PUD. Carlton area has also submitted a grant application.

10:14

RHD states their plan is in the top 5 for the State of Washington. The projects are ready, we just need the money to move forward.

10:15

KW explains how WSU has been working on this too. We started in 2019. Then, we added the digital equity piece to ensure that all people have access to internet. Digital Equity means that people need to have the devices and knowledge to get connected and utilize the internet.

Here in Okanogan County, we were positioned to begin. WSU will funnel money to the Counties. We

were the 2nd application to get flow through funds. The initial infrastructure plan was in 2020. RHD feels the key piece to BAT's success is sending out surveys and invitations to all different people, organizations, and businesses. We wanted a diverse group. Once they listen to BAT's goals are, they want to talk about it. The PUD isn't here today but the legislature used a lot of our data, but we still did not get funded for different reasons that we have learned about. I learned that the PUD is a wholesale provider.

Conconully also has problems with wireless and cellphones.

RHD states that we just keep getting applications in.

The Tribe is putting in their own infrastructure. A lot of work is being done there.

All goals are to continue to find funding.

CB feels the Economic Alliance is the right place to spearhead this. Businesses need the internet.

KW explains more on Digital Equity. We are reaching the 'covered population'; elderly, disabled. This is a result of inclusive planning. We've identified the people that work with this 'covered population'. We learned so much from our surveys.

CB states that good communities are built through associations and communication.

RHD states this has been a huge learning experience for her. Having reliable internet is so important.

CB – I'm quite pleased with how well this has gone.

RHD asks BOCC what are the next steps. LJ will draft resolution. AH states that we need to put in ARPA language.

GM states the project is approved. We just need the scope of work.

KW spoke about the layers of data they have compiled on Okanogan County that could be used for other applications and other projects.

10:52

AH talks about a letter of support for the Watershed Council.

BOCC states there will be no meeting on Wednesday.

JN will be meeting on Friday with realtors and other people concerning a development on the other side of the Lake. He suggested they get ahold of DOE.

11:05

Moved, Seconded, and Carried to approve the proceedings for June 20th.

AH asks about the Monse Road vacation. Doesn't there need to be a hearing?

LJ -This resolution is just to direct the County Engineer to report on on such petitioned vacation and that a public hearing will be held on August 22nd.

11:07

Moved, Seconded, and Carried to approve the Consent Agenda;

1. Ratify-Grant amendment A Contract #22-62210-011 -Community Action Council
2. Ratify -Request for Amendment C Contract #20 6221C-119-CDBG
3. Contract -Fairgrounds Rental Agreement – DNR
4. Contract -Dispatch WAMIL-991 Contract E23-030, Sheriffs Office
5. Appointment Letter – Mazama Advisory Committee -Bill Craven

6. Resolution 69-2023-Platted Road Vacation – Plat of Monse
7. Resolution 70-2023 Adopting a Revised Fairgrounds fee schedule
8. Resolution 71-2023 Adopting a revised Fairgrounds facility -rental contract

LJ brings Resignation of Brian Bowes to the Board of Equalization. He will not have time to do this. Board of Equalization is convening on July 17th, and begins with the hearings on August 10 & 11. LJ has consent agenda items to sign and the 67-2023 interlocal agreement with the Town of Twisp didn't make the Consent Agenda.

11:32

Adjourn until the afternoon session.