

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday August 27, 2024, AM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC, District 1
Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2
Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC Chair, 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 click 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:

- Planning Director hiring a compliance officer, by promoting within, Board approves
- Public Comment: Ruth Hall agrees with Commissioner Hover to bring requests from State and Federal agencies to the Board in public meetings.
- Superior Court Clerk Update: 1. Will be getting free training from the Administration of Courts. 2. Planning for an exchange program with Walla Walla Court Clerk for training by very experienced, knowledgeable staff. 3. Ongoing projects going well. 4. Difficulty/challenge of having staff videotaped by 1st Amendment people. 5. working with 2 local schools to visit courthouse for educational opportunity. 6. Budget is tight due to copy machine repairs. 7. conference with other court staff for best practices.
- County Assessor Update: 1. Able to certify the tax rolls early this year – before September deadline. 2. Shares data on countywide property taxable values. 3. Audit had a procedural finding to be remedied. 4. Reports on this year's levy rate. 5. Discusses market and timing for creating new EMS district.
- Executive session for ongoing litigation
- Board considers creating a new EMS District from north of Monse to Canadian border, excluding the municipalities.
- Public Works Update by County Engineer: 1. Looking for new gravel pits. 2. Johnson Creek Road Study will be right after Labor Day. 3. received estimate for Loomis easement survey. 4. Prioritizing prospective funding list – Bonaparte Road reconstruction. Loomis/Oroville area road and widen Twisp River Road.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:45

9:00

Pledge of Allegiance

9:01

Pete Palmer (PP), Planning Director in with a proposed resolution for upgrading a Planning Administrative Secretary position. This position would go from a Grade 14 to a Grade 16 with added duties. PP – I'm also wanting to hire a Compliance Officer to deal with a backlog of compliance issues. This would be to act on complaints, such as EPA. There will be no changes to regulations.

This position will have a new filing system with an updated database. PP – I want to promote Josh Hickman from Planner 2 to the Compliance Officer. This could be done at our September 9th staff meeting. AH asks if this is within the budget? PP – Yes, it is already in the budget.

9:07

The Board approved the position. PP will complete the Resolution.

AH comments that we (the Board) have to listen to all different people worrying about a compliance officer. I want to be clear. This is complaint driven – not looking for violations.

PP – This will handle the backlog. For instance, the complaints about the Ellesforde transfer station. PP- when we get complaints from Dept of Ecology (DOE), the compliant officer will handle them, things such as CAV's (Critical Areas Violations). Everybody will be treated the same.

AH- If a Federal or State Agency is telling us what to do, I want to know about it. PP- I could bring that to the BOCC meetings or directly to you. CB talked about how there are different plans, such as the Shoreline Management Act.

AH – I would like PP to bring these to the Board in a Public meeting, so we can determine if this is our understanding of the intent of a certain regulation.

PP- Anytime we are contacted by another agency, I will bring it to the Board.

CB discusses another scenario where a Planner sees a violation in a neighborhood, that everyone is violating. Maybe it needs to be changed. (*or enforced*).

AH – For instance, a junk yard. A bunch of cars outside the designated area. AH refers to a situation outside of Winthrop, going to Mazama. PP would need to look to see if there is a complaint.

CB quotes that a rule of thumb is, don't adopt rules unless you're going to enforce them.

PP gives an example of something she did while working in Nespelem. We brought in a car crusher and people could get this service for free. They just needed to get the junk vehicles to the crusher site. AH asks how did that work? PP – people towed old cars, used a wrecker, etc.

9:21

BOCC approves Resolution 114-2024 changing a Planner 1 (Josh Hickman) to a Compliance Officer position.

9:27

Public Comments: Ruth Hall agrees with Commissioner Hover to bring other agency requirements to the Board in the open public meeting. This would help promote understanding and transparency. It would help the Public know where this possible change may be coming from.

AH – Back to the creation of an Emergency Medical District. (*AH reads the statute governing the legislative body in creating a new taxing/service district.*)

9:30

Update from Superior Court Clerk, Susan Speiker (SS).

SS reports that on September 18th, she will be presenting to the Bar Association on changes in our Courts. Also, on September 18th & 19th, we'll be welcoming Administration of Courts (AOC) here for free staff training. The last time AOC gave training here was in 2018. Hence, we have much needed training. SS- The MODUS project that was approved last year is going well. I am still using that money finishing up the project. SS – Also, I was in a meeting with Pierce County about the group that call themselves the 1st Amendment Auditors. They come in and videotape us while working. Then, they put it on social media. The advice I heard from that meeting – Be Boring. If you are boring, there will not be a big splash on social media. SS – It is hard for staff to work under that much scrutiny. We're currently in an up-cycle of this with more challenges coming.

SS – We are currently working with Liberty Bell and Tonasket Schools to visit the Courthouse. We want them to get excited about the Criminal Justice System.

SS - & the Court of Appeals are making their rounds of the lower courts in their area and will be coming here on September 23rd. We have a 30 minute slot.

9:43

SS – We are diligently clearing space for the remodel. & another positive – the Clerk, Juvenile, and Prosecutors Office are working together to create better communication and working relationships.

SS – I will be requesting a Supplement to pay for an exchange training program that we will be doing with the Walla Walla Court Clerk, that is retiring. We want to take advantage of these skills, so will be doing an exchange with them for better practices and compliance issues.

AH suggests another way to pay for this since it is only \$3,000.00 & asks SS if their budget is tight, SS – Yes, the budget is tight due to copy machine issues. AH to SS – working with the Auditor to determine the best route to pay for this SS – Walla Walla is super gracious. The only cost will be per diem and lodging. SS – I will talk with the Auditor. I'm sending Clara on September 11th.

9:57

County Assessor, Larry Gilman (LG) brings maps and documents for update to BOCC.

LG – We'll be certifying early – before the September deadline. We'll be in Zone 4 for physical inspection. This is the Oroville area. LG – We have some areas where we will double up to get through problem areas and for safety.

LG – We get audited every year. This time was the Levy Audit. They did have a finding. It is procedural; in the certification from the BOCC to us, the Junior Districts (not the School Districts). A certification form needs to be included from BOCC to the Assessors' Office.

CB – When we do this, we'll need to have a discussion. LG – We will include this going forward. We haven't done this before. You all will just need to sign the educational paperwork. CB – it doesn't require a motion if it is just an acknowledgment.

LG – Before we move on to Oroville, are there any questions?

LG – Once you certify a levy to us, we go through the levies and statutes. Once certified, there is no going back. Before that, we need to be communicating with the districts, back and forth.

AH – Can you terminate an old District? LG – I'm not sure how that works.

Civil Deputy, Esther Milner (EM) – interjects that she saw LG and we did Codify the Tonasket Rural District. We'll need to make some changes, however.

LG – I brought maps so you can see the School District lines, including exempt parcels.

New construction values this year are \$97,646,152.00. Other taxable values have gone up. Our figures are current with the exceptions that could still come up; Exempt parcels, Senior exemptions, Board of Equalization, and destroyed property.

LG – property values are not going down. Tonasket is the most economical district to live in.

AH – asks LG if there will be new validation for a new district for 2026. LG – This needs to be created soon to get the right time periods in order to be ready for the tax year 2026.

LJ – reports that we had a CDBG grant from the Department of Commerce for the Brewster Fire District.

AH – the area we are considering for the new EMS district is from Monse to the Pine Creek Road, excluding municipalities. *AH has many questions regarding the creation of a new EMS district, such as Where do excess funds go?* JN and CB both acknowledge that Oroville and Tonasket both have advisory boards for their EMS districts.

LG – Discusses the tax rates (approximate) Increase of 2-3% for next year. Not as much as the previous year, which was 5%.

LG – we are at 72% of Market Value (*in assessed value*) right now, hoping to get closer to 86% of market value. We are supposed to be at 100% market value.

10:38

*****Board goes into Executive Session for 15 minutes, for ongoing litigation under RCW 42.30.110 l(i)

10:56

JN to AH – There is actually a company that combines Districts.

10:58

Board votes on a motion seemingly from the Executive Session (*I never caught what they approved*)

11:01

Public Hearing – Utility Franchise for Ziplly-Fiber – Communication lines. 04-24 with Public Works, JoAnn Stansbury (JS). This is for from Oroville down to Brewster Area. The Franchise agreement has been signed, but the hearing needs to be continued. Ziplly-Fiber wants to look over the agreement a bit closer. This is different from the 1974 agreement that is being updated. There were no public comments. This hearing is re-scheduled to September 17th at 11:00.

11:10

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer gave his Public Works update.

JT – there has been some grading of roads due to the rain. I am working on the Prospective funding list. There are 3 projects: The Bonaparte Road reconstruction, Loomis/Oroville Road widening, and Twisp River Road widening. JT would like input from BOCC on prioritizing. The Bonaparte Road reconstruction – he expects to be approved. JN to JT – you truly need to prioritize.

11:15

Public Hearing – Cattleguard Franchise 02-24 – Lookout Mountain Ranch with Public Works, Anna Randall (AR), Environmental Coordinator

AR – This is a new cattleguard franchise. We are asking for it to be 20 ft cattleguard. AH asks why so wide. JT explains that it needs to match the width of the road, for safety and ease of maintenance. The franchisee requests information on the concrete base. The County actually installs it once the owner purchases it. BOCC approved Franchise 14-2024.

11:21

Back to JT Public Works report, Rodeo Trail Road is an upcoming project. AH asks if the County still owns the property under the railroad trestle. I have been asked 2 times for a land swap.

CB talks about the flood control issues on the Rodeo Trail Road. We should look into it a little more.

AH asks LJ if EM ever got back to the BOCC about the worthless piece of hillside land in the Methow?

BOCC approves the Prospective Funding List authorized the Chair to E-sign.

JT – Regarding the Loomis easement, we have a survey estimate from Erlandsen for \$4,481,

11:32

BOCC approves moving forward with the survey.

JT – We've been looking around for gravel pits in the Nespelem area. The 5-year agreement on the Haeberle Pit is due and we may need to look to replace that one.

AH notes there is another application for LTAC funds for summertime parking in Mazama.

JT asks for the letter to be sent to the State Auditor in response to the Audit. JT – the Johnson Creek Road study will be right after Labor Day.

11:45

Meeting adjourned until the Afternoon