

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, April 24, 2023 AM & PM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, Vice-Chair, District 1--Absent
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, Chair, District 2
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
CHa—Crystal Hawley, Deputy Clerk of the Board
JP—Joe Poulin, Maintenance Supervisor
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
NP—Naomie Peasley—Fairgrounds Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
SK—Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management
MW—Mike Worden, Okanogan County Dispatch Center
CN—Craig Nelson, Okanogan Conservation District Executive Director
EL—Ely Loftis, Okanogan Conservation District, Wildfire Resiliency Lead Planner
WK—Will Knowlton, Department of Natural Resources, Community Resiliency Coordinator for Okanogan and Ferry Counties
DM—Dave Mullins
WW—Walter Walker, President, LifeLine Ambulance, Inc.

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:

- Pete Palmer, Planning Director, and the commissioners discuss a gravel pit operated by Lloyd Logging that's out of compliance with the Planning Department (its Conditional Use Permit (CUP) expired in 1987) and is also out of compliance with its Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit. They discuss the enabling the Planning Department to issue fines to ensure compliance.
- Palmer and the commissioners continue last week's discussion about Zone Code revisions.
- The commissioners, DNR and the Okanogan Conservation District (OCD) discuss wildfire resiliency planning in the county and the importance of tailoring Firewise programs to each community.
- The commissioners and Dave Mullins discuss funding issues of the Tonasket EMS District. Mr. Mullins has a list of possible solutions to provide more hours of service in the district. Commissioner Branch promises that the BOCC will consider the items on his list.

02:10—Pledge of Allegiance

CB will attend the Forest Health Collaborative meeting.

CB—The ARPA (American Recovery Plan Act) report is due on Friday. Been having problems with the website. It says "Error fetching data". I have the data I need, but I can't enter it. They've extended the deadline once before when there was trouble with the website.

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16:00—No public comments.

CHa has received email from two people interested in being on the LTAC (Lodging Tax Advisory Committee). AH and CHa discuss a wording for a resolution for new members of the LTAC. AH would like to know what these people's interests in tourism are and what district they live in.

AH discusses the Auditor's glass project in that office. The design work is completed and AH received four bids for the materials. The estimate from D & R Glass Works is for \$46,786.29, which is within the grant capacity for the Auditor's Office and the rest of the cost will go to our maintenance doing new countertops, etc.

AH—I move to accept the estimate from D & R Glass for \$46,786.29, including the sections, the countertop pass-throughs, the labor to install and the shipping. Authorize the chair to sign a contract. Five weeks turnaround. Motion passes.

22:30—Discussion returns to LTAC.

AH—We need five members. One BOCC member, two receivers of the tax money and two payers, per the RCW. Reviews how difficult it was in the past to get members from districts other than the Methow Valley. There are also at-large members.

CHa—There are two at-large positions open.

BOCC reviews who is currently on the LTAC.

32:50—JP gives the Maintenance Department update.

JP—I got a bid from Divco to replace the rooftop unit at Child Care at the Justice Center. I talked to Jeff about it. The units are 30-35 weeks out. We may want to tell the architect that it'll take a year to get any cooling. We need to redesign the units we just designed.

AH—We don't know if this rooftop is what we need or not, correct?

JP—We have the units we're renting, but you were considering purchasing them instead.

JN—We talked to Cari (Hall, County Auditor). Everyone was good with purchasing them.

AH—We better double-check to make sure we have a motion to purchase.

AH—We talked with Cari to figure out where to take the money from. Earned interest or contingency reserve. We can do a solid number in October. (To JP)—can you get the numbers for us, and we can do the motion today?

AH—CHa produces the numbers. AH reads the three quotes. Asks JP to get shipping costs and accessories from one bidder so that the bids can be compared fairly. JP will bring them this afternoon.

JP—They did the test bores down there. Looking at the strata.

JP—That's all for me.

43:10—NP updates the BOCC about the Fairgrounds via zoom.

NP—Good morning. I've received three applications for my assistant. Should I include you and SK in the interviews?

AH—Yes. Can you set a date with SK so we can interview them right in a row?

NP—Yes. Next, the ecology blocks are arriving this week to keep the south end of the track from washing away. That's the last of the safety grant and the starting gates are all installed.

AH—What about the lighting project?

NP—I'm hoping that gets done before the grant expires or that we get an extension for the grant.

NP—Racehorse barns—they won't start manufacturing them until payment is received, or if there's a resolution to purchase them.

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AH—Laney is working on the resolution right now. Can they generate a contract or a commitment to purchase? I think we already passed a motion to purchase. If that's not enough for them, see if they can send us what they want to be signed.

NP—OK. I'm working on a resolution for in-kind payment by volunteers in lieu of payment for facility rental fees.

NP—I may be losing a maintenance person. He's a major asset, but he's looking for higher paying work. I'd like to give him a raise.

BOCC discuss whether this would be a promotion, or a move to a different step. They ask NP for more information about grade's pay amount, or if there are job titles that would be more appropriate.

CB—In essence, this is a proposal to have a higher job description for a higher level of experience.

AH—We'll look at it. It's good you brought it up.

AH—When do you start watering?

NP—We get the hoses out next week. That's all I've got.

59:05—PP—I've got an update on one thing before we get to the zone code revision.

PP—I'm Pete Palmer, Planning. I want to talk about enforcement. Last week, we issued Lloyd Logging a violation notice. I had a lot of calls last week about their work at their gravel pit just outside of Winthrop. They've almost doubled the size of the pit. They had a two year permit in 1985 and it expired. They didn't apply for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) from the county. They've had DNR (Department of Natural Resources) permits but they're not in compliance with them either. Eventually, DNR issued a 20 day notice for violations. Neither DNR nor I can shut them down immediately. That was a concern for the people who contacted us—the view from the highway (which is a scenic byway) and the view from their property. The pit used to be hidden, but now you can see it all around.

AH—I live right across from that pit. You could always see it. They've done some reclamation so it looks better. They started to terrace the wall and that got all the attention. It's a DNR permit and it's got the same information as ours. It took us three days to get ahold of DNR. They said they'd send a stop-work order.

CB—But they're doing more work to expand the pit and that's not a permitted use under the county?

PP—No. We don't have a current CUP. It was originally approved for seven acres. In a DNR document they just sent, it measures over eleven acres.

PP—We have permits for below and above three acres. They originally had a CUP in 1985 issued by the Board of Adjustments for two years. Then they'd have to reclaim it or apply for a new permit.

CB—So they're out of compliance with the county and the state with regards to size?

PP—Yes, and some other state requirements.

CB—So they need to apply to the county?

PP—They have two options—apply for the CUP or appeal our order to get a CUP in within the 20 day period.

CB—That's pretty straight forward. But your ability to stop work...

AH—That's the weird part. It's a small business. The RCW about surface mining says a small business needs a seven day notice to stop work.

PP—Our code says after we give a first notice, they have 20 days to appeal. There's a 20 day lull. We issued the notice last week.

AH—If it's out of compliance, they have to fix it.

PP—But they continue to work, and we have no authority to stop it.

AH—There's work going on in the pit that's unrelated to the newly expanded part.

PP—They still don't have a valid permit from the county to operate at all.

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AH—I'll say this—it's the only commercial pit in the north half of the valley. I'd like them to be in compliance, but these people who say "shut it down", nobody will get concrete, nobody will get road base material.

CB—I understand the ramifications.

AH—I know. My comment was for the general public.

CB—I understand what you're saying. It's on record that we're looking at ramifications of something not being permitted properly. I hope that's understood. If we don't have the authority to move on this, and there are situations like this all over the county.

AH—Here's what I looked at. This CUP was done in 1985 vested under the 1979 zone code. Why didn't the BOCC at the time look at this?

PP—It falls on the Board of Adjustments and the Planning Department that all of these years it was never looked back on.

AH—So now we have a 40 year old CUP and the county doesn't permit the mining portion of it. We only permit the use on the property. The original permit said they could only run 7AM to 7PM and they had to put oil or water down to deal with dust. (Everyone laughs.) I understand it. PP looked into the laws and sent the letter as soon as she could. DNR knew about this last year.

CB—On compliance issues, there's an opportunity to get an agreement in place. We don't want people to think—I'm not going to get a permit because the county isn't going to do anything anyway-- I'm just trying to put this in a messaging kind of as thing as you are.

AH—I totally believe they need to be in compliance.

CB—We permit pits separately from the DNR. We don't depend on them.

AH—We have no regulative authority over the mining part. Their pit diagram—how low they can go, etc., is all on them. It's just the land use and the mitigations of the activity. We can't tell them you can't take off this front face off.

CB—You can only tell them you can't work without a permit.

PP—We can tell them—both DNR and the county reference the other's permit. To be in compliance with the county, they have to be in compliance with the DNR. That's kind of how we got them.

CB—Sounds like a good way out of it.

PP—I didn't intend to go into the whole thing, but I'd like to look at the enforcement in the zone code. I'd like to move forward with enforcement—be able to write a violation and be able to assess a fine to get their attention. Then work with them to mitigate the situation. Write up a compliance plan for them to follow. We need to get something in our zone code to work with people instead of just sending letters.

CB—If we don't have enforcement, we'll be in this problem forever. Our goal is to have a compliance plan that eventually puts them into compliance. Cites example of a sawmill in Oroville.

CB—We want compliance because somebody's going to end up being hurt.

AH—The DNR has told people they learned he was out of compliance a year ago and people want to know why you didn't do anything.

PP—They've been sending him letters, but he's been ignoring them.

AH—That's not on us. Now we find out about the CUP, and since it's a small business, the RCW talks about this. PP did the right thing—talked to the attorney and sent a letter.

CB—We have to make sure of our permits.

AH—Is there nothing in the code that allows us to write a civil infraction.

PP—That comes from the Prosecutor's Office. There's no cushion that allows the staff to try to work with the owners to mitigate the situation. What I'm asking for—have the Planning Director get these compliance letters drafted and try to get it mitigated before we send them directly to the Prosecutor.

CB—Let's look at the Zone Code right now.

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PP—It's 17A.360.

1:21:20—JP is back with the documentation he was going to provide. The bidder with the lowest price is out of stock

CB—Thanks. Sunbelt price is very close and they have it in stock.

PP—One more thing about the draft zone code. We got public information requests for the draft document. Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) says it's exempt because it's a deliberative draft. Refers to [RCW 42.56.280](#) . So we don't have to send it to people who request it.

CB—Have there been any requests to participate in the discussion we're having?

PP—Only on zoom.

CB—Sometimes I'll let people comment, but it's unfair to other people.

PP—The Tunk rezoning is a good lesson on that.

PP—Have you seen the emails from Michael Murphy from the valley's homeowners association about the trailer that was moved in. We talked to the woman who owns the trailer. She volunteered to write a statement to move the mobile home and did move it the very next day. But I'm hoping that having some enforcement will cut down on the harassment the staff is getting.

AH—Here's the interesting part—PP did what she did but there's still 20 days. There's no stop-work orders.

PP—And sometimes they can continue after the 20 days.

AH—OK, so we need to rewrite the code.

PP—EM thinks it'll work better if we don't include the Sheriff's Department or the Building Department and just do it ourselves.

AH—People now-a-days say—Oh my God, you've got to stop that right now!

PP cites example of the junk dealer who was finally shut down after making multiple agreements and not complying with them.

CB—With the pit, given the circumstances, it warrants some sort of agreement. But the junk yard had an agreement and there was blatantly thumbing their nose at us.

AH—The junk yard wasn't complying with its CUP. The pit's not out of compliance with the conditions of the CUP.

PP—Actually, they are. They've expanded.

CB—What's important is what we're doing about it. It's our permit, so we should do something. Same with marijuana, shoreline permits.

1:36:10—PP—We left off on page 68 of the zone code. 17A.130—Methow Review District—Special Provisions—110.B

Let's go to the next section.

1:37:50—AH—We're on to Rural Residential 17A. 140

1:46:25—AH—Urban Residential 17A.160

1:50:20—AH—Neighborhood Use 17A.170

AH—I bet it's about Mazama.

1:57:45 Special Review Commercial 17A.190

AH—This one is really long. Look at all the provisions.

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PP—This is one I wanted the BOCC to review very carefully because of all the special provisions.

2:01:05—AH—Planned Development 17A.200

CB—Unless you get it all spelled out, it's a free-for-all in hearings.

PP offers to look at Planned Development zoning in other counties to see how it compares.

AH—If you need another person, ask us. Good planning takes a lot of work and there's a lot of it going on in the county.

2:43:45—CB—We're going to take 15 minutes to discuss something with Deputy Warden.

PP—Want me to schedule more time another day? Can we do a whole afternoon?

AH—Try to schedule on a Monday afternoon.

CB—I don't promise not to get deeply into a topic.

MW—Good morning. I'm Mike Worden, Okanogan County Dispatch. I'm working on a possible COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) School Violence Prevention grant. We can spend it on communications hardware to coordinate a school violence event. Deadline is May 10. Talked to a school district. I need a letter of support and get accesstogrants.gov. Hope to get that soon. For the BOCC—I need approval to apply for the match.

AH—What's our match?

MW—Probably 25%. We can apply for up to \$500,000.

AH—And the match coming out of Communications funds? I'm all for it.

MW—It would come out of budget 161.

AH—You need authorization to spend \$125,000 on a grant? I'm willing to make the motion.

CB—My questions—why is the policy in place?

AH—He can't obligate the funds without our authority.

CB—He can't obligate the match without getting the grant. My concern with this policy is I want to know if somebody is going to spent time & effort applying for a grant we wouldn't approve of anyway. And sometimes you don't know what the match will be until you get the grant. When it comes to the Sheriff's Department, you spending time to apply for a grant is your job.

CB—Another question about the grant, just so I'm informed,—this is a relationship with a school district, are they applying for the same grant?

MW—No.

CB—I saw Omak was applying for a resource officer.

MW—Omak said they're not applying for the two grants I'm looking at. Time line seems like they won't.

AH—I move to authorize the Sheriff's Chief of Communications to apply for a COPS grant with a match up to \$125,000 from fund 161. Motion passes.

AH leaves to return a phone call.

CB thanks MW for helping him meet with the BOCC remotely.

MW leaves.

CB—Back in high school in Portland, OR, we had a resource officer, and he'd chase us around all of the time. But I think there was value in having him around.

JN—Yes. Depending on the cop. It's amazing how much animosity there is to that—having cops in schools.

LJ—MW said he's now got access to the grant application website.

JN—I just looked up Chelan County's rate for a civil infraction. It's \$750 for the first one and \$1,500 for each one after that.

AH—That's good.

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Adjourn until 1:30

3:03:00—Continued Public Hearing—County Surplus Property for Public Auction

AH—LJ says she's got all the info she needs.

LJ—to CHa—The BOCC is auctioning material surplused by other departments. Legal notices made and it's been advertised for two consecutive weeks in the two papers. We had a hearing and continued it today. Saturday, May 13 at the Fairgrounds. The money will go to the department that surplused the item and whatever doesn't sell will be disposed of in the most economical way. Items sold to the highest bidder at in-person auction or by electronic means.

CB—Suggest some changes to 50-2023. Legal postings were made. Maybe another recital that sets the hearing dates and said we had the hearings. Two recitals instead of one.

AH—I move to approve Resolution 50-2023, including the attached list of surplused items. Motion passed.

CB—Hearing is ended.

3:16:35—AH—Question about tonight's Planning Commission Meeting.

LJ—I'm getting lots of phone calls from people who think the public can attend only by zoom.

CB—I'll go talk to PP. CB leaves.

CB returns. People can attend in person, but the zone code revision won't be discussed.

AH—I'd like an executive session for RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)—to evaluate the performance of an employee. Makes the motion. 10 minutes—until 2:03. Nobody else invited.

3:29:00—Discussion with DNR and Okanogan Conservation District about the Wildfire Resiliency.

WK—Today we wanted to update the BOCC and learn how we can work better with the county as a whole about the Washington Wildfire Ready Neighbors Program. The program has been going on for several years. Most recently we had an event at the Cascade Condos. It's been finalized as a Firewise USA site. DNR provided a Firewise micro-grant. They got a dumpster for needle-cast and leaf litter. Also installed screen under the decks to keep embers from getting under the decks and igniting them. He had a similar event in Edelweiss. Have another event in the Methow on May 13. We struggle to engage communities in the north part of the county. We'd like to see what they're doing, what do they want us to do.

EL—On top of that—the DNR pilot project—we've been working for 5 years, we were gathering data from Newby Creek in the Methow. Produced a report to help us know what sort of help you'd like with wildfire resiliency resources. This will help us provide what the different communities want.

AH—When you do the Firewise programs like Edelweiss, Pine Forest, do you discuss ingress and egress? It's pretty poor. A big complaint I heard was that the DNR didn't stay long enough to protect someone's house, but he had a five mile long driveway. So I hope you get the message out about ingress and egress. They should be more prepared.

?—I think that's been pushed.

AH—I hope so.

CN—People need to understand before they build and also know about their watershed. And if know about post-fire flooding. Also, we make sure people understand they need to be their own best defender.

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MG—People have a right to build, but do we sent people to address the problem before they build? The Planning Department? The Building Department? Or if there’s already a house and another person is going to buy it?

AH—Maybe when they get a site analysis. Put out information sheets listing resources about considering fire when you site your house.

MG—How do we push that?

CB—If someone is coming to get a site analysis, they get it from Planning. But when they are buying the property, they’re not thinking about fire. You’re stepping on the realtors’ toes. Maybe we could talk to realtors to change some of their message.

AH—Get realtors to give out information.

EL—We have that information. We do home assessments, but we do pre-purchase assessments, too. And also do forest health advice.

CN—There can be one page of information to give to someone who comes into the Planning Department. Then they can make a more informed decision.

CN—Realtors could distribute this information, too.

EL—There are also websites where you can get information specific to a piece of property.

WK—When they’re building new homes, and the land is being cleared, if they know about defensible spaces, they could clear more while the equipment is right there.

AH—When I worked for the lumber yard, some people wanted to save all the sage brush. They’re like 50 gallon drums of oil. One guy from Wyoming wondered why people in the Methow don’t clear the area around their home.

WK—A lot of it comes down to state, county or local level—when you get your building documents, the Firewise principles are built in.

CB—There used to be a publication “So, You’re Moving to Okanogan County”. If we published it today, it’d be different and have a lot of Firewise stuff in it. Another question about your five year study, is this connected to the Idaho study?

EL—This is that study. It broke down due to Covid and now this is continuing it.

CB—I remember a video about different communities and how some of them are more open to regulation than others. That was very informative.

EL—Meetings we had in Twisp and Pateros showed that. Some people in Methow are encouraging more regulation.

CN—About 20 years ago, Cal Fire had the motto “If you don’t care, we don’t care.” They had to change it. But it’s brutally honest. So we need to figure out what’s the best way to inform a community how to help itself. The more people who do the Firewise things, the more the fire is slowed.

MG—asking WK—How did this come about?

WK—The Community Resiliency Program was born out of the Ten Year Wildfire Strategic Plan identifying the most at-risk counties and having one person address those areas. Working with lots partners at different levels—state or local.

AH—The Central Washington Initiative (CWI) with the Forest Service...

WK—Yes. We work with CWI. Also, the Wildfire Crisis Strategy is a big topic for federal agencies. Big push right now is from insurance companies. Whether there’s code enforcement to enforce WUI regulation.

CB—Sort of like as it’s been with floodplains regulations. It costs us all in the end, so I’m not against regulation. We need to look at subdivision designs concerning ingress/egress issues.

CB—The booklet was called “Living in the Okanogan”. It got a little push back from the realtors.

?—And it’s not just an Okanogan County issue.

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CB—Some people don't want regulations that's one thing, but if some places are better at being regulated, go ahead and regulate them.

MG—You've had two meetings. Anything stand out? How about the third meeting?

WK—Great question. I've been here 10 years and with the DNR in 2018, they weren't real popular. But now when we had the first two meetings, people have changed. They wanted federal agencies there. Talked to the Tonasket Ranger District to get some of them there for the next meeting.

EL—WK hit it on the head. They want more interaction with government entities.

EL—These meetings are run by Ray Ledgerwood with many years as a facilitator. Try to have different communities mixing together to tell us what they're doing, what they want to be doing.

EL—We use lots of maps showing previous fires.

CB—Amazing to look at fire overlays on a map. Looks like pretty much the whole county has burned at some time.

EL—They're surprised learning that some lands haven't burned.

CN—One thing that's changed since Carlton—our population is vastly more knowledgeable of fire than they used to be. They can look at the maps and see the unburned areas are like full of fuels. Maybe there are places that are high priority. Some places have burned twice. In a shrub/steppe environment, fires every few years are normal. Fires in forests are less frequent, but still happen.

CN—Once there was animosity towards government agencies. Trying to see what will help them get over that hurdle. They get the information they need and learn how to find the information.

CN—We need to know where people look for information.

WK—And we want the communities to know there's hundreds of millions of dollars available right now to take action that people know they should do. Main grant is Wildfire Defense Grants. Total of \$1,000,000,000 over the next five years to help state, county, local and non-profits to do what we need to do. We need to know what are your needs for wildfire. We've got four more years to access that money.

CB—Any ideas about who we could join with for more successful applications?

WK—From the county perspective—getting a Fire Marshall for the county and building a program about roof design, and ingress/egress. There's money to hire the employee and enforce requirements.

MG—We submitted for a Community Wildfire (*inaudible*) grant. We didn't get it, but we'll submit it again. Get a more detailed plan.

CB—In a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, I can see partners being the DNR, OCD being part of our outreach support. I see that opportunity and we haven't done a very good job about getting those plans. Another opportunity—the DNR and more independent employees traveling around the county and we get to know them. Get to trust them. We see the DNR people around and that should get back to Hilary (Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands).

MG—We're having the meeting in Tonasket, Commissioner Neal. Who should we invite?

JN—Well, you said the Fire Chiefs. The Granges, too.

CN—It's good to hear from your district. Their needs are different from the Methow Valley and we need to shift our messaging.

WK—For me, that's is. Let us know if there's something we need to address.

CB—I knew a guy who had two fires burn right across his place. He now knows all about defensive space and it's rubbed off on the neighbors a lot. Also, I haven't seen the blaming and anger in the later fires that happened in earlier ones.

CN—We've learned a lot because we've had lots of experience. We're getting better. Also, we submitted for a big grant but didn't get funded, but we'll try again. Pay them to do fuel reduction on county right-of-ways or private lands.

WK—And fuel reduction around buildings.

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CB—Just ask if you need a letter of support.

WK—I'll leave my card with you.

They leave.

4:27:00—Discussion of the Oroville EMS with Dave Mullins

DM—I've given you some information and I also talked to Wayne Walker (President of Lifeline Ambulance, Ltd.)

DM—I didn't get a response to my FOIA request for response times, so I have to accept what Walker is saying. We also talked about the money situation. The levy produces about \$290,000 for the county and the city gets \$26,000.

DM—The levy failed in 2020 but passed the next time. We need Lifeline and we need 24/365. When the levy passed in 2018, it was understood we'd have 24/7/365. That's not mentioned in the 2020 levy. The finance side of it--50/\$1000 of assessed value. If the ambulance is moved from Oroville to Tonasket, the response time goes up by 20 minutes.

DM—Wayne, can you explain why you think response time has been cut instead of gone up?

CB—We don't want a debate between you and Lifeline. If Wayne wants to come up and talk to us, he can.

DM—Without the 911 calls, he's got a good point. The public needs to hear this. It's hard for me to understand.

DM—Lifeline averages 4 calls/day—2 calls out of Oroville and 2 calls out of Tonasket. In turn, they try to get reimbursed by insurance companies. How was the decision made to go to a shift, 8-6 and 8-8.

AH—Because we looked at the responses coming in. We did an analysis—this many dollars buys that many hours of service. We now have a two year reserve in our budget, so we can get more service.

What is your solution to the problem? What do you want us to do?

DM—I'd like to see the EMS service back at 24/7.

AH—That's impossible with the money we've got.

DM—I understand that. But what can we do to increase service?

AH—We're going to maximize the revenue that's come in—we're getting about \$298,000 total, so we've got some options. We'll use as much money as we can because we've got close to \$500,000 in reserve to use if another levy doesn't pass. Now we can use our entire budget and put it in the new contract. That's the plan.

JN—The current contract is up in June.

DM—By the end of the year the county will be by \$594,000 and the city will have \$129,000 in the bank. So are you thinking about increasing the hours?

AH—Yes. Right now is about 50% of that.

DM—but if they increase the overtime, it'll cost more.

CB—But we're not in negotiations right now.

DM—You three negotiate the contract?

AH—Yes. We're the EMS Board.

DM—Why not have a committee of five people?

AH—Because that's not state law and that's not how it works.

DM—You've got a lot of people asking for money and lots of departments to keep up with. Do you find it hard to do?

AH—Nope.

JN—That's our job.

CB—Let me respond to the idea of a committee. We can have advisory committees if we want, but it's not all so easy to create a committee and interact with a committee and contractors, too.

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DM—You ask about solutions. One of the levy things is—how about a county-wide EMS system? How about a half-county-wide system? Then it'd be distributed equally. What do Tonasket and Okanogan pay for EMS?

AH—Okanogan isn't in an EMS District. Tonasket is within the Tonasket EMS district. So the Tonasket levy goes directly into the EMS fund. Over in the Methow, Winthrop and Twisp pay into the EMS fund and we distribute the funds to Aero-Methow, another contractor.

DM—But what's the feasibility of having a half-county district—from Pateros north? Or a county-wide levy?

AH—If everybody who's not in an EMS district wants to pay more taxes, I suppose we could. We've talked about this in 2018. We'd have to sell it to everybody who doesn't pay into an EMS system.

DM—But everybody is getting the benefit.

AH—No they're not.

DM—But people in Malott are still getting ambulance service.

AH—Those people are paying... Wayne, I don't know how Omak and Okanogan work without being in an EMS District.

WW—There's enough value there that it's based on fee for service. Like car rentals.

AH—But Malott is too small.

CB—And Malott isn't a local government, either. It's just part of the county.

DM—So you think that pushing for a half-county district would be impractical?

AH—Not impractical, but people would pay more taxes for service they already get.

DM—If you ask people in Oroville, they say they've got a contract. And that's the one you decided to implement for the rest of the county—the rural areas.

CB—Oroville region has its own EMS district and we made the decision for the district itself.

DM—You're looking at expanding the service with the funds in reserve...

AH—No. The funds in reserve won't be used to expand service.

DM—But the funds in reserve will be used for other things—training, etc.? It's in the contract.

AH—Read me that portion of the contract.

DM—Let me find it.

CB—Another thing—how long was Lifeline contracting with Tonasket?

WW—I think it's been six or seven years.

CB—Why did we end up going with Lifeline in the first place?

DM—The conflict between the previous volunteer service and the politicians.

JN—The entire EMS crew resigned voluntarily, and we had to go to Lifeline.

DM—They were going to have to resign if they didn't have anything negotiated by the end of the month. But that's beside the point.

CB—My point is Oroville and the county said we can't be without an EMS crew. So the county contracted with Lifeline. It's a relatively young relationship. What we come up with today will probably be different than what was done in 2018. Since then, we're making up for the lack of revenue. We've had a few ideas, and I don't know exactly what it'll look like when it's over.

DM—Here's the answer to the training question in the contract.

AH—That's an RCW saying we could use reserve funds. We don't want to put that in the contract because it's a finite amount of money. We don't want to spend more than what we get with the levy.

DM—So we're talking about solutions.

CB—The reserve isn't part of the contract.

DM—But didn't the voters vote on it?

AH—No. Any good business has a reserve. By putting money in a reserve, we're creating protection for the people we're serving. If the levy fails, people won't have any emergency service.

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DM—But I don't want the levy to fail.

AH—It doesn't work like that. Voters can vote against it if they want.

CB—The first time, I don't think voters understood they were renewing a levy. I talked to them. It happens that voters sometimes that voters don't understand what they're voting on. Between the time the levy failed and the next levy passed, we were running on reserve.

DM—Well, maybe we could increase the assessment of .50/\$1000.

AH—We're up to the maximum allowed right now.

DM—Wayne says they move the ambulance away from Tonasket sometimes. Is there a backup?

AH—I leave the operational work to the contractor. You are the only person who's told me they don't respond in time. If a majority of the people in the district told me that, we'd have to discuss it with the contract. I don't know what you're trying to do.

DM—I'm trying to provide better service to Oroville. There's lots of documentation including newspaper stories.

AH—Can you bring those in?

DM—Yes, I can. I don't say things I can't back up, but I haven't had my information requests filled.

AH—Wayne, can we tell the time from dispatch to when they arrive at the scene?

WW—We can, but they're not documents that exist so they're not public records.

DM—I've got 911 dispatches in the past, prior to 2020. Shows the dispatch time, the time on the scene, but doesn't show when they arrive at the hospital.

WW—He's got a copy of records that existed at the time the request was made. It exists in a data base, but we'd have to generate a document to fill the request, so it's not within the scope of a public records request.

DM—Another thing, if money is available for money for training for Fire Departments, they don't respond to every EMS request.

JN—I said the firedepartment responds to any call we're dispatched to.

DM—Yes. You don't respond to EMS calls. The other aspect is the same with Molson and Chesaw. They've against putting EMT guys up there, people to respond prior to the calls. To respond after hours to stabilize patients prior to the ambulance getting there. I know Molson and Chesaw are way out there, but there may be firefighters who'd be willing to respond. That's another thing we can implement with a training program.

AH—Where would the funding come from?

DM—From the EMS program.

AH—We can't pay for 24/7 coverage. Why are we trying to add more stuff to this?

CB—You make suggestions. If it's a worthy suggestion, we'll discuss it when we get into our negotiations, we'll talk about it.

DM—I'll give you a copy of my suggestions. Just ignore the one about calling a taxi cab...

DM—I understand about using prior EMTs because their credentials expire. If you don't have the money for training, you get \$290,000 per year, and if you invest some every year...

AH—We don't need to save any more for reserve. Over in my district—the Methow—we have almost \$800,000/year we put into the contract. So if you model the new contract over that—you'd want the most service you can get for \$290,000/year.

JN—And if you take money away for training, you're taking hours away from service.

DM—But you'll increase response time, and that helps the patients—cardiac, stroke, OD—if they get to the hospital sooner.

CB—You've spent a lot of time talking to the Oroville City Council and us and it's always a debate. We've got a lot of decisions we made using input from the public. We've taking your input and looking at the

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pros and cons of each. Some of your solutions are ones we've talked about some and we haven't said yes or no on them. We talk to people about what they want.

DM—But just increase the training for fire departments would increase the response time to get to the hospital.

AH—I suggest you look at [WAC 246-976](#) . It talks about emergency medical services and trauma care systems. It goes through all of the training requirement. It's a very extensive list.

DM—Yes. I've read it. It's a problem in rural areas. But I just want to increase the service.

AH—So do we.

DM—I know you do. I've voiced my complaint now. The increased training for fire departments would help tremendously. Maybe it's time now to look at that. I understand the costs of having it.

DM—Thank you for your time. I really appreciate it. If you need any leg work done, I'd be happy to do it. DM leaves.

CB—Any other business.

JN—Last week's minutes?

AH—I'm working on the Lake Management District's budget. Trying to put it in the same format at the others.

5:10:00 JN—My biggest concern if anybody that's not affiliated with you, you assume the liability as the county. That's my concern.

AH—Absolutely.

CB—I was thinking about his list of the 10 items. We could go through the list and talk about them and respond to him. That's the best we can do.

JN—That's a major step. Out of the five years I've been listening to him, I've never see solutions.

CB—There are a couple of them that look like stuff we've talked about before. Maybe he got them from us. I don't know.

AH—There's been this thing that the fire departments—there are some guys who will go to help but a lot of them don't want to. It's nothing against them.

Sound isn't being recorded for a little while.

CB—We can look at them, but I don't think it'll put it to bed.

WW—If I may, I've spoken to the Molson and Chesaw fire departments. If they want training, we're happy to provide it, but then they have to go through a procedure to get licensed by the state and have liability protection. But it's not just initial training. It's ongoing. And most of the departments say it's hard to keep their fire training up. If there's EMS training, too, they're afraid that volunteers will quit.

CB—The chiefs in charge of making sure it happens, and in the EMS district in Oroville, somebody was named as coordinator, but if no one likes him, they say we don't recognize that guy. Maybe better to say "He's your boss. Do what he says." But it's all volunteers. Some said firefighters were basically regulated out of the business anyway.

AH—Wayne, have you heard about complaints?

JN—I've heard only very few. And if you're in an emergency situation, five minutes seems like an hour.

CB—And you choose where you live, too.

JN—What are initial hours for EMT?

WW—168 hours with 10 hours of observation. If you want to do the EMR (Emergency Medical Responder) course, it's about half the hours. Concerning complaints, I haven't heard any about response time. It'll be about something else. And we get a lot of good comments, too. The clerk in Oroville, Joanne, is very responsive. She'll tell me about all of them. Often, it's Mr. Mullins coming in and asking for information.

CB—I had a conversation with the Molson fire chief about driving the ambulance. And there's no way to get back to Molson.

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CB—With EMS, there was someone who did badly in training and didn't get appointed and tried to turn everyone to his own ambulance service.

CB—I may be able to zoom in tomorrow or maybe not.

Adjourned at 3:53.