

**Okanogan Board of Health (BOH)**  
**Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 1:30 PM**

*These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at HYPERLINK "<https://countywatch.org/>"<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 the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at HYPERLINK "<https://www.okanogancounty.org/>"<https://www.okanogancounty.org> .*

**Present:**

Lauri Jones (LJ), BOH director  
Mariann Williams (MW), BOH board member  
Jim Wright (JWr), BOH board member  
Jim Wallace (JW), Health Officer  
Jill Gates (JG), BOH secretary  
Mike Harr (MH), Environmental Health director  
Jon Neil (JN), County Commissioner, BOH board chairman  
Andy Hover (AH), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Jon Neil (JN), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Quill Orr (QO), BOH, Colville Confederated Tribes representative  
Denise Varner (DV), BOH, Okanogan City Council member  
John Carlson (JC), North Valley Hospital

*Time stamps refer to a recording available on the County Watch website.*

**Summary of Important Discussions:**

- Fall prevention classes offered to low-income seniors
- Passage of an inter-local agreement giving legal framework to cross-county support and collaboration
- Maryann Williams relays gleanings from national local boards of health conference in Tacoma
- Covid hospitalizations up, increased vigilance in health care settings, one death reported
- Bat concerns addressed
- Record set for opioid overdose calls to 911; two "drug houses" destroyed
- Libraries offer clean-air spaces for fleeing wildfire smoke; vigilance encouraged
- Board of Health envisioning creation of finance committee to tackle revision of salaries; new employee sought to deal with emergencies, will cooperate with Emergency Management
- Building permits down in Methow, up in north of county
- Meeting adjourned at 2:32

0:00 - Additions to the agenda: Inter-local Agreement for Project Support Services between Okanogan, Chelan-Douglas, Grant and Kitties counties, and a report on the National Association of Local Health Boards conference.

Financial Report - JN asks about a voucher for North Cascades Athletic Club. Health Director Jones says the “Senior Falls Program” offers free weekly fall prevention classes to seniors on fixed income. She says this club and North Valley Hospital are the only ones to provide this service. It’s a yearly contract and Public Health will do outreach to promote it.

- Three from Okanogan County and six or seven from Chelan-Douglas will take part in a very sought-after leadership training program

- Family Health Centers will receive a Rural Equity Grant.

13:00 - Administrative Report - Jones says the Inter-local Agreement for Project Support Services gives a legal framework to some things they’ve been doing already, like sharing an epidemiologist.

LJ: It’s not a dollar amount. For example, counties might want to send staff up to train with Mike (Harr, Environmental Health). Each party has their own liability. We do it (already) but we haven’t had a legal agreement, which, this day and age, we need.

MW: Who signs it?

LJ: The administrators from the counties.

CB: It lets us put out a work order.

LJ: Like when Chelan-Douglas didn’t have an environmental health director for awhile. They had pressing things in Bridgeport and asked if we could provide staff help. CB moves to approve the inter-local agreement. Motion carried.

22:13 - LJ: Maryann Williams was privileged to attend the local boards of health conference in Tacoma, “Charting the Next Vision: Evolving to Advance our Community’s Health.”

MW: It was really interesting. There were boards from all over the nation. They’re structured so differently. I was pleased to be part of Washington State (with its) money for public health, and tribal participation on boards of public health. They have a system... improved outcomes for workforce development, factors that promote job satisfaction and retention. (25:12) Pierce County shares some work they had done, like an online service for food servers (certification?) and making things available for translation services.

CB: They’re willing to share their resources.

30:24 - Health Officer Update - JW announces an increase in Covid activity. Partner organizations have personnel out of work. Hospitalizations have gone from zero to four per 100,000. JW: What we’ve seen in the past is outbreaks that don’t spread generally. We’re fixing the threshold at four for a return to more careful measures in health care settings. ...We’ve had a lot of reports about bats and bat exposure. No rabies activity. When someone is concerned about exposure they should see their primary care provider or go to emergency after washing the wound. They shouldn’t try to trap the animals. But, if you sleep in a closed room and wake up to find a bat in it, you should

initiate treatment. Bats are responsible for the vast majority of cases in the past 75 years.

Opioid Crisis - LJ: In June we had 21 overdoses called in on 911, the highest number on record. We're having conversations with law enforcement. They're seeing a steady stream of drugs and number of arrests and citations...

JW: We have had plenty of wildfire smoke over the past week. We've distributed masks. We have clean air spaces in libraries. You can consult the "EPA Air Now" application. Above the 150 level, limit outdoor activities and over 200, cancel them.

DV: If our Covid rates increase at a dramatic level, are there opportunities for vaccination or testing?

JW: Emergency rooms, family health centers, hospitals. Confluence has testing as well... Vaccines continue to be available... If mass vaccination events are necessary we will certainly (*organize them*).

Administrative Update - LJ: We've seen ten positives just today. It's all over. We're still low but when the numbers come out... QO asks for some home tests. LJ mentions the *white powder at the courthouse incident*: Of particular interest is the preliminary result. I have a copy in the sheriff's office. (*Back to the opioid crisis*) For the whole of last year we had 105 calls to 911 (*for overdoses*). As of the end of July, we're at 87.

QO: We had little victories. The drug house on Dayton and Fifth in Omak was torn down finally. Campers are gone, the city bulldozed it. And the one on Garfield Street is on fire right now. I stopped to get pictures. It's probably going to burn to the ground.

MW: Is the opioid increase due to more people using, or what's being added to it? Or is there a way to tell?

MH: Street Value. You can get a high for \$4. IT's mass-manufactured.

LJ: It's not like the heroin high that would last quite awhile. There were a lot of long-term heroine users. There are no long-term Fentanyl users. ...The say in Seattle it's 25 cents. We have to figure out. How to stop the supply somehow. We're going to need a LERC (local emergency response coordinator) or a PIO (public information officer). We're going to need our emergency plans updated. ...I'm looking at several job descriptions.

AH: How do they work with the county?

LJ: They have them working with Emergency Management (EM). We're working on the ESFA (*Education and Skills Funding Agency*) plan with EM. We don't ever do emergencies in a vacuum. I've already talked to EM about training this person to deal with not just health emergencies. I'm glad to have the expertise of Liz Walker, coordinating smoke (*response*) regionally. We did have a Covid death. We haven't put anything out, so as not to be sensational. QO announces that *Tribal Health, where she works, is getting a public health nurse*.

Environmental Health Report - MH: We're starting to see the effects of the Hearst Decision (*limiting subdivisions*). The numbers are way down in WRIA 48 (the Methow) and up in the north part of the county. ...We're busy. Our new employee, Sarah, is amazing. She has on-the-job experience with inspecting, and a good way of connecting with food establishments. Between Planning and us we still haven't (*gotten together*) but we'll have a staff meeting together. Communications with Planning and building have

been great. ...We've been getting a lot of solid waste complaints, which is normal. Trying to figure out the avenue to correct those. We have state funding available.

DV: Solid waste complaints?

MH: Anywhere from roadside dumps to neighboring properties that aren't good about taking their solid waste to the landfill. ...We can attempt to do an enforcement process...

LJ: Would the board agree to a finance committee? We will be looking at grades of staff, to be more in line with the rest of the state. *(AH is willing to be part of this committee.)* I like the way he grills us on every little dime!...

AH: So you're going to propose a finance committee project? *LJ talks about 5 (salary) steps, maybe going to 10 like others have.)* AH: If you're giving them the budget, have it in by November 1st. If you're being your own accounting office where the county is just writing checks and doing revenue, by November 30th. *There is some joking with DV about her questions as a new board member.* AH: Highway 20 is opening tomorrow at 9 a.m.

1:02:21 - *Meeting adjourned*