

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday AM, February 20, 2024**

Present:

Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC Chairman, District 3  
Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2  
Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC, District 3

Cameron Burnette (CBur) – Deputy 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](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:**

- Commissioners checking on status of HB 2057 relating to funding Search & Rescue –currently in Executive Session in Olympia.
- Zak Kennedy (lobbyist) gives updates on house and senate bills of interest to Counties, also predicts next year will be a really tight budget at State level.
- Public Comment: Isabelle Spohn, community member expresses real concerns about the Planning Commission process, especially regarding tonight's hearing on the rezone and the lack of clear mapping of zoning areas in the county, especially in the Methow Valley. BOCC points out this hearing is for recommendation back to them, and then there will be another public meeting/hearing before the final decision.
- Financial Committee Meeting with Treasurer, Auditor, and Finance Manager: Approval of new debt and investment policy, 5.50 % interest on investments currently, discussion of registered warrants outstanding, and how to deal with Aeneas Lake Irrigation District that is unable to pay expenses from assessments - running on public funds. Two bid openings for liquid asphalt and soil stabilizer with Public Works.
- Solid Waste Manager: New EPA rule changes coming and recycling bills in the legislature.
- Public Works: Road maintenance and 2 Senior Mechanic positions to advertise due to upcoming retirements.
- BOCC will be at Planning Meeting this evening.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:58 until 1:30 in the PM.

9:00

Meeting opened. CB brings up House Bill #2057 introduced by Keith Goehner, District 12 Representative which will provide funding for Search & Rescue. CB wants to be able to track the bill and get in contact with Senator Shelly Short for the hearing date.

AH reports that we're late on paperwork for the Wa State Fair funds. Will get that done. CB also received a nasty phone call regarding the Fair.

9:09 CB asks about squeezing in a discussion about the East/West contract with Community Action. CB wants to be sure that the Chief Deputy PA has seen this and given an opinion. CB to e-mail her.

9:15

Public Comment: Isabelle Spohn, Community member expresses real concerns about the process of the Planning Commission, especially in regards to this evening's re-zone hearing. The commission had no meeting in January and it was in December that the BOCC received the document to review. Ms. Spohn stated they wanted to get the decision completed right away after the hearing – same night, after just barely hearing public comments and written comments received. Ms. Spohn will be commenting at the meeting this evening, focusing on the Methow. First of all the map is all the same color – not reflecting the different zoning areas. Ms. Spohn has talked with Planning who stated she needed a parcel #. She is unable to see clearly and easily where the differences in the zones are taking place. The height and density chart is confusing also. Ms. Spohn has been waiting a long time for this process to be completed and is finding that it is really difficult and problematic. She is not sure how long she will be able to comment, BOCC is unsure of that either. Planning is running the hearing this evening and will be providing a recommendation to the BOCC, who in turn will have a public meeting/hearing before deciding on approving the changes. Ms. Spohn has also submitted 2 sets of written comments. AH comments that the BOCC is trying to get code up to what is required. AH is also not sure about the MV boundaries, and agrees the map is confusing – all the same color.

AH explains this recommendation from the Planning Department was initiated by BOCC.

CB has been looking at the zoning map and also reading some comments. CB states if the process is being challenged, then we need to look at that. CB also notes how public comments can go on and on, say the same thing over and over again.

9:35

Zac Kennedy (ZK), Lobbyist for County gives a brief update on the current bills in this State Legislative session. ZK states that a lot of the controversial bills are gone. ZK was recently put on the spot regarding HB 835 which puts some federal economic development funds into the rural areas of the State. He is not happy that King County is getting a lot of those funds and wishes to change the language of the Bill to state Frontier Counties of which Okanogan is one of, along with Lincoln and Ferry Counties. Then, we will get the monies rather than the areas of the big, urban counties. Rep Joel Kretz is aware of this issue. CB states that being designated at a frontier county might be helpful for other funding, etc.

ZK notes that the Budgets are adding \$2 billion. If this initiative passes, we may be in trouble. We'll be making cuts next year to Capital Budget Projects, etc. He is expecting a shortfall next year. HB 2257 about Search and Rescue funding is a popular bill and should not have issues with it. ZK also notes that the State Legislature is having a hard time 'getting their act together.

9:46

CB shares that he spoke with a lobbyist while he was in Olympia regarding animal shelters. He may be able to help us with our feasibility study.

AH notes that he is looking through the RCW's on official controls. The Board may extend official controls. (*I think is in regard to animal control or zoning*)

AH is looking at the zoning map and agrees with Isabelle Spohn on the confusion. AH also thinks we need to have a public meeting specific to the zoning. We'll have an active discussion with people, and

then a public hearing. We've done this before.

10:00

Finance Committee Meeting: Pam Johnson (PJ) Treasurer, Cari Hall (CH), Auditor, and Lisa Schreckengast (LS)

PJ had already sent out the financial reports. Any questions?

The investment interest rate is currently 5.50%. It's early in the year and there is not much jumping out yet. CH did her best estimate of election costs based on previous years.

10:03

PJ asks the Board if they are ready to approve the new debt & investment policy?

10:04

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the policy.

PJ states that changes the warrant rate to 7.42% - registered warrants(outstanding) are \$247,944. It's been about 8 years since the hospitals have been on registered warrants. CB asks about the TV District/ PJ responds that they have their assessments. Discussion of assessments vs taxing district.

CB asks if there are any suggestions regarding the Aeneas Lake Irrigation District? They need to lower their expenditures or increase their rates. CB asks if there are any other options for them. PJ offers - maybe a line of credit, but they're not financially stable. The – we bank won't do it. Maybe we need another agreement with them. The longer we wait with them, the worse it gets.

Hospitals are levy based, irrigation districts are based on assessments. Right now, it is \$380 per acre. This District handles 1100 acres.

CB states we aren't doing them or us any favors allowing it to be running on Public Funds.

CH -We can't do things the way we are now. We need to meet with them.

CB – it is something we need to deal with. We can't continue to use public funds.

CH asks if these districts are considered infrastructure? If so, can we use ARPA funds to get them back on footing, get them out of the hole? PJ explains they are getting a loan from the Dept of Ecology at a 0% interest. CB – we are contributing to their demise.

AH compares his irrigation costs to Aeneas Lake Irrigation District. We're lending money they can't pay back. It's not working.

10:39

It was moved, seconded, and carried to authorize the Auditor or Treasurer to request for funding. CB wants to be on the same page and we need to know that we are following the law.

10:51 – end of finance committee

11:00

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer and Shasta Stidman (SS), Public Works

Bid Opening 2024 soil stabilizer

2 bids: Mag Chloride - \$288,547 & Dura Blend - \$268,300

11:10

Bid Opening for 2024 Liquid Asphalt 2 bids:

1. for \$1,393,887 and 2. Inland Asphalt for \$1,264,822

11:20

Ken Kovalchenko (KK), Solid Waste Manager gives an update on HB 2491 paying for curbside recycling – it died. Maybe next year.

Some discussion on glass recycling. HB2207 on illegal dumping has died also.

KK – there is a new EPA ruling about air quality and KK will be going to some meetings to learn best practices for this. This is in regards to wood stoves and natural gas appliances.

11:45

JT updates for Public Works.

Not much rain in the forecast. We are waiting for the roads to dry up.

He has learned, once again, that the ER&R rates have to be approved by the BOCC.

11:48

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve 2024 Road levy Certification.

JT reports there are 2 mechanic positions that will need to be advertised as there will be 2 retirements this spring/summer. JT to work with HR on resolution for these positions.

JT reports that the Cameron Lake Road project is still alive.

It may require a road vacation. Will report more later.

JT plans to attend Planning Commission meeting tonight. JT has been working with a list of legislative bills that may affect us. There are a few bills on impact fees and 1 bill on Property Tax, small engines, and apprenticeship utilization projects.

11:58

Meeting adjourns until the afternoon session.