

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 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
IS—Isabelle Spohn, commenter
CHa—Crystal Hawley, Deputy Clerk of the Board
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
RHD—Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, Economic Alliance
KD—Kurt Danison, Economic Alliance
SC—Stella Columbia, Acting Fairgrounds Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
EM—Esther Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor
SK—Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management

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

The time stamps refer to the times on the AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date at https://www.okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php. To locate items in real time, the clock on the wall in the AV Capture screen can be helpful.

Summary of significant discussions:

- Commissioners discuss reviewing and updating the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, including reviewing action items and insuring roads that could be used for escape from fire are signed accurately.
- Pete Palmer, Planning Director, and the commissioners discuss possible fixes for unpermitted buildings.
- Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Okanogan Economic Alliance, shows the commissioners her draft policy for funding projects. She also tells the commissioners about how the BATs (Broadband Access Teams) have been able to secure large grants from multiple sources to fund broadband in Okanogan County.
- Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management and Stella Columbia, Acting Fairgrounds Manager, and the commissioners hash out multiple issues that need to be resolved before the Fair begins September 7.
- Meeting adjourns at 3:44.

00:30—Pledge of Allegiance.

CB—At 11:55 there's 5 minutes. (To JN) You're going to the Emergency Management meeting on Wednesday? I was looking at the resolution about the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (89-2022) that we're supposed to review the plan every year. In anticipation of that meeting, I suggest we take a look at it. I was looking at the issue of community wildfire protection plan—several goals in that plan speak to that,

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

including that roads be marked clearly. If you feel it's worth bringing it up at the meeting.... But we already talk to MG a lot. We've been talking to MG about other things usually.

CB—Re: staff meetings this morning: I told SC not to attend because we'll talk to her this afternoon.

CB—Nothing eye-grabbing on the Consent Agenda.

LJ—District Court Judge Short and District Court Administrator Darla Schreckengast would like to talk about staffing issues. They're on the agenda for Tuesday, but maybe that will have to change.

LJ—The Title III discussion on tomorrow's agenda may also have to be moved.

LJ—Also Public Records training is scheduled this week in the hearing room. Trainer is from the AG's office. Discussion of if/when commissioners need to be retained.

10:00—AH arrives. More discussion of Public Records training.

CB—To AH—JN will be at the Emergency Management meeting on Wednesday. If you look at the MHMP and give me feedback. That satisfies the statement in our adoption resolution that we review it every year. There are some items in the plan about identifying roads and improving the signage that Isabelle (Spohn) brings up. Looking at implementation dates is important.

AH—We're getting our money tomorrow. (?)

CB—It must one-year since the first distribution.

14:50—It's 9:15—Public Comment period.

IS—Thanks for notifying the public about the meeting Wednesday. I have a couple of comments about the MHMP. I only knew about the comment period for that plan from a Facebook comment from someone I don't know. I looked into it and the public was given 5 days' notice to comment on a 700 page plan. I may be the only one who commented. I emailed back and forth with the consultants who wrote it. The draft had concerns about dead-end roads in the county. I addressed that but I think that was removed from the plan.

IS—I wonder if that Wednesday meeting is open to the public.

CB—I think so, but I don't know.

JN—I'm not sure.

CB—We can check into it.

IS—OK. Thanks. Is it meaningful for the public, the fact that they're having that meeting?

CB—Depends on what people are interested in. One issue we have to pay attention to is somebody has to know how to run the zoom meeting.

IS—Who are the entities involved? The people who signed the plan?

CB—That's the bulk of it. Cities and towns, probably the Sheriff's Department and the fire districts.

IS—Thanks for the information. I think it's important that you guys knew there were only five days for public input.

CB—We can follow up on the road signs. I remember there was a discussion about whether SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) was applicable and if it was, that would mean a comment period.

IS—the consultant I talked to was apologetic about the public comment period. Plus the time was during the Cedar Creek and Cub Creek fires, so I doubt many people were looking at the MHMP.

IS—On a slightly different issue, there was a New York Times article on the Kelowna fire and how had been stalled by the tribes' actions on the property. They called them "fire prevention zones", and the actions are similar to what was presented in Twisp at the fire prevention meeting with Dominick DellaSala, as opposed to what the Collaborative is supporting—more logging—based on the assumption which I disagree with that fewer trees mean less fires. The article talks about removing ladder fuels, removing excess slash and taking no old-growth trees, only smaller ones. Also prescribed burning, a low intensity burn.

IS—OK. Thanks very much for your time.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

23:30—CB—Why don't you get started now, Pete.

PP passes out documents to the commissioners. I have an email I wanted to share with you. This is the building permit for the Sheriff's equipment storage. You've already got approval to sign it. We filed for a building permit already, but they had a new form they wanted us to use.

CB—Before you get to that, let me share this with the other commissioners. I could have read it out loud, I guess. That email addressed the permitting of ag buildings that turn into residences. I've said it before, that practice that's been going on for decades. To address that today, there are implications of enforcing it today. As we do that, it's a challenge of monitoring it from the beginning. The other implication is we have to make sure if we're doing enforcement actions on those, that we do it to all of them. The department will have to go really fast. If you've got an approach to that, you should bring it forward.

PP—We're going to need to talk to Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) about that. I pulled the permit for that property. It went clear through the inspections and the Building Department noted that there was no plumbing, no electricity, no sewer to the property. What happened after we approved the ag building, we don't know what happened to it.

CB—Reminds me when one building official was going to respond to a neighbor—typical of when those issues come up—and I go back in time when the building official red-tagged everybody. There was a lot of discussion about –what do we do now?

PP—A lot of these properties you'd think when the Assessor goes out to assess them, he should see it as an ag building and he sees it's a residence...

CB—It changes the assessment.

PP—I've talked to Dan (Higbee, Building Department) about it, but I don't know how we close the loop-hole about what happens after we're done with it.

CB—Part of it closes itself when they go to sell the property.

PP—This one is a cash or owner contract. Nothing would come out until they tried to get insurance.

CB—Or a permit for something else. Septic system issue. But you could get a couple of sales on that, but eventually somebody is interested in having a legitimate property and does the due diligence. There are realtors who say a property is eligible for an established use but it wasn't. There are victims to this practice. There has developed a whole culture of people with developments without permits or illegal septic systems. I'll be interested in what you and the Building Department and the Health Department can come up with.

PP—I'm trying hard to close that gap. Brings me to my next thing. We got an email from Pam Johnson, the Treasurer, requesting addresses for three properties being foreclosed on. We found that there had never been an addresses issued to them. So will the county issue 911 addresses for these properties without any fee being charged. That will result in people getting free addresses. Or is one department going to charge the other one for foreclosures?

CB—After the foreclosure, the property belongs to the county?

PP—They need an address to post the foreclosure.

JN—I think the county could establish a lien for the address and add it to the foreclosure cost.

CB—I suppose. We're taking on the cost anyway? Should we have the Treasurer here to discuss this?

PP—Yes. But she needs the new address on or before September 1.

CB—Did you have an idea about what to do?

PP—I think they should apply for the 911 addresses and put the cost in a lien. I wanted to run it past you guys first.

CB—Suggest that to her and if she agrees, great. If not, we can get both of you here. Maybe we'll have time tomorrow to talk about this.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

37:40—PP—This summer we've had a real uptick in complaints about festivities in the Methow Valley. A lot of people haven't gotten permits but some have. There's a problem with the festival events timeline. There isn't enough time for people to appeal the permit. It takes about 54 days for the process to happen. At day 26, it's in the paper and that's the first opportunity for neighbors to learn about it. Then there are 21 days to comment. The Okanogan County Code [Chapter 5.25](#) gives the applicant the opportunity to apply 30 days before the event. But 30 days doesn't give us enough time to process it and have the 21 day appeal process. So I'm going to give you guys a code amendment to have people submit their application 60 days before the event. Then there will be time for people to appeal.

PP—Once they have a sufficient number of people or number of events per year, it becomes an event center and requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). What's happening is we get complaints from neighbors about loud music until 10:00 or midnight, or they're got 100 people there and they haven't seen any notice of it. We're trying to fix it so people can comment rather than complain.

CB—We're getting close with Esther's revision of the code.

PP—If Esther is getting close, I can just work with her.

CB—There are a lot of parties that don't get permits. Do we need a process for if you're going to have a wedding and now there's a big process that will add more stress.

PP—There's a big difference between having a family wedding at your property and advertising as a wedding venue.

CB—OK. If you're doing it for money.

43:30—PP—I've got three agenda bills. They were emailed to you guys.

PP—Easiest one is the Lake Management District (LMD) (*inaudible*). To take the money from the LMD collected as taxes and pay the Noxious Weed Board for spraying. \$40,879.62.

PP—The next two are contracts. One is the 2nd amendment to the Oneza Contract. She's asking for \$10,000 (but thinks she'll only spend \$5,000), I told you a while ago when we extended the timeline for the zone code revision. It's in our budget. It brings the total of the contract not to exceed \$80,000. (Discussion of the LMD budget. The commissioners decide they'll need a budget supplemental and wonder if the rules are the same for a junior taxing district as for the county.)

AH—What was the \$10,000 for Oneza for?

PP—We extended the contract for three months and we haven't heard from the Methow Review District yet, so it's to cover that extra three months.

AH—Move to approve the addition \$10,000 to Oneza and Associates for the contract extension. Motion passes 3-0.

PP—The next one is the Methow Watershed Foundation—the new contract for them. Because I'm getting pressure to get this going, I used the amendment clause in the contract to extend it another two years and add two years to the budget. \$39,600. The contract is the same scope of work and budget format. Same funds from Public Works Water Quality funds.

AH—In 2025, we should look at the amount of money in the Water Quality funds and look into getting funds from Twisp and Winthrop.

PP—That's it.

JN—What does it cost the county for the addresses?

PP--\$75 each.

AH—I move to approve the extension of the Methow Watershed Foundation for two years and \$39,600. Motion passes 3-0.

1:08:40—MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Okanogan County Emergency Management. The Crater Creek fire from Canada, it's got a type 2 team, but it's looking good. We hope the rain will help us some.

MG—State Rt 20 closed because of the Blue Lake fire. We hope it'll be rectified tomorrow.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

MG—There was a small fire near the Chelan County line. About 125 acres. Local fire departments were there. I think it's doing well.

MG—Fire in the Lost River area. A travel trailer and some vehicles but it didn't get into the trees.

MG—Any questions? We're waiting for the weather system that's coming in. Potential for rain and also lightning.

CB—Our commitment when we adopted the MHMP to review it every year and encourage the BOCC to review it. It takes a lot of reading. I think the review is mostly looking at the action items/tasks. One mentioned the issue of marking roads accurately. There were partners involved and funding sources. JN is going to bring it up in the Wednesday meeting with the rest of the participants in the plan.

MG—Don't know if funding sources were identified.

CB—Seems like it mentioned looking for funding sources. It's part of our responsibility and it takes a while to do. I think the review is for the future rather than looking at all the past stuff.

MG—Does there need to be something submitted to the BOCC or what? How do we know when the review is completed?

CB—Good question. It could be as little as a discussion mentioned in the minutes.

MG—Some of the tasks are from cities, so we could ask them, too.

CB—But we made the commitment and we can't force them to do it. But we can bring it up at the meeting and ask if they've had a chance to look at it. Another question about the review: Did we do the SEPA on that?

MG—It was indicated it didn't need to be done.

CB—I thought we did a check list. If there was a DNS (Determination of non-significance) then there's likely a comment period. They may have put that out.

MG—I'll go back and look it up.

CB—Apparently the consultants made a five day review period, but maybe there was a SEPA comment period, too. When do we have to update that one?

MG—We're working on the CEMP (Comprehensive Emergency Master Plan) currently. It's a 4 or 5 year plan. The MHMP is a 4 or 5 year plan. We just passed it in 2022,

MG—I'll be here at 1:30 for the Fair meeting.

1:22:20—RHD—I'm Roni Holder-Diefenbach with the Economic Alliance to talk about the .09 Public Infrastructure Policy for funding our projects. At the last meeting I had to leave early but Kurt (Danison of the Economic Alliance) said we had to put together a policy for funding our projects now that we have the money for funding. I put together a policy and gave you each a copy. Also included are the guidelines for applicants to learn the process for applying. A lot of the language comes directly from the RCW. It should guide us because there's very specific language they use to guide our funding.

(RHD discusses the basic elements of the policy. Also discusses eligibility for evaluating proposals. Definitions are taken directly out of the RCW. Also refers to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.)

2:08:20—RHD—I'll go back and revise the policy document to update it to include what we've talked about. I'll send it to LJ so we can get it passed.

RHD—The last thing I wanted to share was our leveraging dollars, concerning the feasibility studies we did a few years ago about the broadband project. Since our BAT (Broadband Action Team) was created and received \$16,000 for the BAT here and up in the Methow, the Okanogan CCT (Colville Consolidated Tribes) has now absorbed the Methow Valley BAT so we're doing the whole county and part of the reservation. Since 2019, we did our initial studies,

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

- the tribe received an allocation from the federal government and TIAA(?) of \$40,000,000. They're providing part of that as within Okanogan County, Nespelem area, Elmer City area and Coulee Dam area.
- The Okanogan PUD was notified last week they received \$30,000,000 from the USDA for the upper NE part of Okanogan County.
- The Okanogan County Electrical Co-op received \$12,900,000 from the Washington State Broadband Office.
- Ziplly Fiber received \$3,900,000 through the NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) State Program for the Brewster, Tonasket, Loomis and Danville area.

So the majority of those dollars are in Okanogan.

All Ziplly's projects should be done by September 30. They want to have a ribbon cutting ceremony. The PUD wants to do something with the USDA when they get their environmental review and initial stuff to do before they can move forward on the project. They want to bring the USDA's Helen (Price Johnson, Washington's State Director of Rural Development) out here, and include our legislators who have supported that project. That's a lot of money that's coming into Okanogan County. It's a huge investment and a lot of it came from our work in partnering with our BATs. We've got another application into USDA for their Community Connect program to serve the Carlton area. Also in the preparation stages to do the BEAD (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment) funding—the huge federal dollars that are coming down. We're primed and ready to be submitting applications through all of our different entities who have projects.

AH—When do we have to write our \$500,000 checks?

RHD—LJ is working with OCEC to put together a contract for their dollars. Did Craig (?) get ahold of you to do that?

LJ—I don't think so.

RHD—And I talked to John at the PUD. They're talking about using their dollars to do a small project leveraging their funds. We're looking at the middle mile in Conconully, but they know it has to be done soon.

RHD—Looking at the numbers the other day, it really blew my mind. This was all from that initial investment and then we went from that CERB (Community Economic Revitalization Board) application I wrote another USDA grant to get additional funding for fiber to the (*inaudible*) for all of Okanogan County because that's what the state and the feds were looking at. So we hired our same consultant and updated the plan. They had experience with the USDA in submitting applications. I think we need to recognize that emerging opportunity investment has paid off in millions of dollars of infrastructure will be coming into Okanogan County.

CB—To KD--One other question about grant closure—Could you check about the road improvement, there's an obligation to vacate the road. Could you check?

KD—I'll check.

RHD and SK leave.

2:27:16—CB—Did either of you read the well report about the backflow evaluation that was done by the guy from Tonasket? Doug Hale? It might be helpful for this problem and future problems.

Discussion of the well issues and backflow prevention at the fairgrounds.

2:30:35—AH—I move to go to executive session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)—potential litigation, inviting EM and SK for 20 minutes, until 11:50. Motion passes and off they all go.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

Upon their return, more discussion about fairgrounds and the well situation.

2:44:33—Adjourn until 1:30.

4:17:00—SC and MG discuss preparations for the Fair with the commissioners.

SC—I'm Stella Columbia. I'm trying to keep things on track for the Fair. I've met all the staff. I'm getting up to speed about what's been done and what still needs to be done. This is day 4 for me.

SC—Some things still to be done by maintenance, but there's a lot of work for beautification—weeding, raking, sweeping cobwebs off the buildings so they don't look haunted, etc. We need a lot of help to get things spruced up. We also need light bulbs put in. The end of the barns need to be painted.

CB—MG will have more to say about this. Expenditures outside of budget are happening. Kind of an emergency. Safety issues.

SC—There are some things that need to be done that require trained workers, but the sweeping and raking can be done by volunteers.

AH—MG, How's the water system?

MG—It's working correctly now. Water going to the toilets and sprinklers. There was a malfunction at a quinceañera on Saturday night but we got it fixed.

MG—I've tested everything except for the horse barn, but there's plenty of water as long as we don't have people turning big sprinklers on. Describes what people should do in various situations.

MG—We shouldn't fill the water tender there except with a hose running at a trickle.

AH—North RV spots are good?

MG—Yes. But every day we need to flush all the toilets to make sure all the valves are open.

CB—During the Fair, you're not going to worry about irrigation?

MG—Yes. We use less water during the Fair.

CB—Lots of leaky hoses.

MG—Yes. We may need some new hoses.

AH—Water trucks? We've got one down there?

MG—There needs to be about an hour of labor for maintenance and a full tank of diesel. And if we can get two more trucks from Public Works, and get people to come in during their work hours to do irrigation with the water trucks, we can continuously water everything. We need someone who can drive the trucks on the road to Public Works to get the water. We need to have the truck run all day long.

CB—Have you talked to Public Works?

MG—Yes, but they haven't gotten back to me. We need to know about if they work on regular hours or OT?

AH—It's up to Josh (Thomson, Public Works), but we have to figure out how to pay it.

SC—The arena needs to get watered, too. A horse judge said that last year that the arena dirt was too fluffy.

MG—We also need a fork lift to do the stage.

CB—We've got this meeting today to see what needs to be done. We want to make sure we know what needs to be done before we have something for them to do.

SC—I want to make up a list of things that need to be done, so when other county employees arrive, there will be something for them to do. And the barn superintendents and their crews have been doing a great job. Good progress to getting the race horse barn ready.

CB—We're going to have a walk-thru this evening to see what needs to be done.

SC—I'm going to make my task list from that walk-thru. Maybe I'll take pictures, too.

SC—There may be a detailed check-list for the future fairs. This will help next year.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

Continued discussion about preparing for the fair—garbage collection, roll-offs to empty dumpsters into, wood shavings (both new and dirty), picnic tables prepped and set-up, buying enough shovels, work gloves, garbage bags for the weeding/raking crews, worker coordination (how many people will show up when, who can work after 5 PM), procedures for emergency and safety issues, light bulbs, broken windows, training for ticket takers and procedures to deal with people trying to sneak in, electrical work being done or needs to be done, grease traps, need for volunteer forms, assembling and disassembling the stage for the entertainer (AH describes it as a multi-faceted Lego stage), food court canopies, lawn and parking lot mowing or brush-hogging (AH will loan them his if they'll use it "nicely"), storing wood chips underneath the grandstands, and cleaning fairgrounds bathrooms.

5:54:35—MG explains he's done lots of overtime work recently, but he's an exempt employee (so he's not eligible for OT pay). AH tells him to keep track of the hours he's working on jobs that's not part of Emergency Management. Turn the hours into SK so they're documented, and they'll figure out what to do tomorrow after some research. Perhaps a stipend.

MG—For eight years I'm down at the fairgrounds during the fair doing stuff late at night.

6:01:55—CB to MG—I'll talk to you later about the MHMP.

MG—We got a Public Disclosure Request and we complied with it this morning. We've complied with this exact same thing two other times. This time the Public Disclosure employee did it the proper way and it's all documented. It's the first time we've used this system. The CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) was also mentioned in it.

CB—Also, since JN will be at the meeting on Wednesday, we've had a conversation already (about reviewing the MHMP?) and as part of our commitment that we adopted, we adopted we're going to do that. JN might bring that up.

AH—IS also asked for the commissioners to have an annual public meeting to review the plan and include comments from the public. Maybe we should set up the meeting, maybe an hour long. Public meetings are nice because we can do a back and forth.

MG—Just out of the blue today I got a call that said there's a mistake in the plan. I looked it up and there *is* a mistake. In one place it says the 2014 fire was human caused and in another place it says it was lightning caused.

AH—Make sure you document all this.

MG—We have a process.

SC—One more word about the fairgrounds. We all focus on what needs to be done, what the problems are. But we had some people staying in the RV park and they were very involved in the fair in another state and they were very impressed at how cute and attractive our fairgrounds were. They really enjoyed walking the grounds and looking at them.

MG—When is the RV park closed for the fair?

SC—Not sure. I'll have to look.

CB—Because we're using the Fairgrounds Management System, maybe it's just full.

SC—I'm not familiar with the website, but I couldn't find out how much it costs to stay there. So maybe the website needs to be changed.

MG—If someone comes to you commissioners with a problem with the Fair, I'm asking that you make sure it goes to the right person at the Fair.

CB—I've got a list of things to take action on. How do we pay for the lights we're buying from the PUD?

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 28, 2023 AM & PM

LJ—Who'll be responsible for the lights?

AH moves to have Clerk of the Board pay \$8,246 to the PUD from the tools and minor equipment budget line. Motion passes. PUD will deliver them and asks SC to find someplace to store them.

CB—We could combine the other motions—for the production at the fair—lighting, audio, etc.?

AH—Move to approve the fair contracts—lists all the contracts and their amounts—in separate motions. All motions pass.

Adjourn for the day at 3:44