

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners  
Monday, July 17, 2023 AM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, District 3—via Zoom  
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, Vice-Chair, District 1  
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, Chair, District 2—via Zoom  
CHa—Crystal Hawley, Deputy Clerk of the Board  
PB—Paul Budrow, Okanogan County Sheriff—via Zoom  
SK—Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management  
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management  
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning  
JP—Joe Poulin, Maintenance Supervisor

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Sheriff Budrow proposes an increase of .2% in the county's sales tax to fund public safety expenses. The increase would sunset in eight years. He'd like the proposal to be on the ballot this November. The commissioners feel there isn't enough time to plan a budget for the new funds or to get public input for a tax increase. Sheriff Budrow will do more due diligence and the commissioners will consider a sales tax increase on the ballot sometime in 2024.
- The meeting adjourns for the day at 10:19.

**00:50**—Pledge of Allegiance

AH—It's 9:03. Sheriff Budrow, you are on.

PB—Thanks. This is about an increase in sales tax for public safety. Lanie sent me an email. I don't have all the details you have. But we're in need of money in the law enforcement world. This tax is a public safety tax. According to the RCW, we're allowed to up to up .3%.

AH--.3 of 1% is what we're allowed, I think.

PB—Yes. I'm asking for .2% at this point. The Auditor says our income from sales tax last year was almost \$5,000,000 that was received. If we do the .2, that'll bring in another \$1,000,000 that'll be designated only for law enforcement and public safety. It's split 60% for the county/40% for the cities. That could be used for the jail, a patrol (*boat?*), the Prosecutor's Office, etc. Anything to do with public safety. I know we're in a crunch to get this in front of the public for public review. I don't have that email in front of me. Lanie should have forwarded it to you.

PB—Do you have any questions? I'm in Seattle today and that's why I'm on Zoom.

AH—Commissioner Branch is on zoom, too. CB—Do you want to run the meeting?

CB—No, you go ahead.

AH—I have lots of questions. If you two want to ask, feel free.

CB—My first question is about being on the general ballot.

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AH—The Auditor is here. She says it have to be to her by August 1 to get on the general ballot.

CB—OK. Next question—is there a solid plan or do we need to develop that between the time we get it to the Auditor and the election? There’s going to be a lot of questions about what specifically we’re going to be doing with the money, and if we increase our law enforcement capacity, I feel pretty strongly we should increase our prosecutor’s capacity.

AH—Also the Public Defender. I had a meeting with them the other day and we need to look at the amount of money they’re contracted for.

CB—Sure. If we’re effective with law enforcement, we want to hang on to what we’ve got in terms of arrests and that sort of thing.

PB—That’s one of the reasons why I’m proposing this sales tax. If you read my explanation of reasons—the type of crimes we’re getting now, the Prosecutor’s Office is behind on bodies, the Defense Project is behind on bodies. I know we don’t have as much income as these other counties. I know our property taxes just went up, and that’s just us who live here, and the ones who come over and buy our property. But the sales tax would put a little on us, but also with the huge tourists incidence etc., with the crimes being committed, if we put a little on them also. Our tax rate is pretty low compared to a lot (*inaudible*). It’s 8.5% and would go to 8.7%.

JN—You projected \$1,000,000 over what time period?

PB—Over one year with the .2 increase. I have a clause put in that it ends in eight years.

JN—Every law enforcement agency is struggling for dollars, and I support it, but we’d really have to get the information out there.

PB—The public I’ve talked to want to invest in law enforcement. I think this is the time to do it. They’re in favor of what we’re doing and the way we’re moving forward. We’ve got a lot of forward momentum. This will help stabilize the law enforcement entities. And with the new drug law coming in effect, the small towns will be affected. The Prosecutor’s Office and defenders will be inundated with (*inaudible*) charging processes now. If we’re going to do it, I will campaign for this. I don’t want to pay more taxes, but what we’ve got—law enforcement safety is going in the wrong direction right now.

AH—As county officials, we can’t promote it. We can give out information about what it’ll do.

AH—Any time we’ve ever done a tax increase on the ballot, we’ve gone through 12 months of meetings, trying to get buy in from the public about what we’re going to do.

AH—When you said \$1,000,000, you meant that’s the 60% that goes to the county, right.

PB—No. \$600,000 for the county and \$400,000 for the cities.

AH—Right now, .1% is sales tax we’re getting about \$800,000, so you’d be getting \$1,600,000.

PB—My math was way off.

AH—So the county would be getting about \$960,000 per year for eight years.

AH—You’ve got a lot of things on your list: police officers, corrections officers, prosecutors, funding the drug task force, crime prevention efforts, and court and clerk programs. Would we have a set percentage that you go into each category?

PB—I don’t know how this works yet, but I try to be creative. You are the guru of the money, so I’m...

AH—I worry about the eight year sunset and you put more bodies on that sales tax, at the end of the eight years, you’re going to burn current expense with the labor dollars. So you may be able to build a labor force, but then you’d probably have to shrink it down because you’d injected almost \$1,000,000 into our funding stream.

PB—This will let us move into planning now for eight years from now, and the tax base will be higher when this sunsets.

CB—I think Andy’s got a good point. Eight years is a long way from here. I’d be inclined to adopt a tax to have strong (*inaudible*) situation for the county. I’m apprehensive about making a rollercoaster ride out of it—having successes and then taking away the successes by taking away the whole criminal justice

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funding. The other thing I was thinking about—I'd be inclined to do what AH was talking about—break the money out into percentages so we've got a reasonable plan in place.

AH—One thing I'd be concerned with—people saying is that just going to raises? So you're not increasing our public safety, you're just giving more money to the existing...

AH—Obviously, labor costs go up and police work is hard. If we're not specific about what we're going to do with the money, people are going to eat us alive. You don't have a plan. You're just asking for a bunch of tax dollars that we don't know what you're going to do with, and we're the ones that budget.

CB—They'll also ask about the other increases, they'll ask what we've done with it. We just have to get our ducks in a row. And I think we can. We can provide that information without campaigning when the question is asked.

CB—That's not saying we couldn't do this. I think AH and JN are saying this, too.

PB—I'm not taking anything against it. I understand completely where you're coming from. I looked at budget season and seeing what the needs are. I didn't realize until just recently that we had this opportunity.

CB—I get it. I think we all get it.

AH—It's hard to put this on the ballot this year until we have the outreach and a solid plan. How will it increase public safety? The only metrics I hear is: how will it stop property crime or put more people in jail? How come the same guy isn't in jail and keeps stealing my stuff? Without the metrics, people will have a hard time seeing how the money would be spent. I'm not opposed, but if we take the time to put ballot next spring.

Discussion about ballot dates throughout 2024.

AH—And if the measure passes anytime in 2024, it would take effect until 2025. We need to develop a plan—how much for more cops, how much for more vehicles, how much for the prosecutor's office, how much for the jail? Then people will know exactly what we're doing.

CB—One other point, if we fail the first time, it *may* be harder the second time. We've been successful two times already—for juvenile and communications. We came out with a pretty good plan. For juvenile, it was about private contracting. And with communications, Officer Worden did a good job of getting the information out about that. I'd hate to see it go down and the next time the public says—Hey! We said no!

PB—Not a problem. This was a last minute thing. I'll do my due diligence. The learning curve is pretty steep, but it's really fun. I'll get all the facts and we can work together.

AH—And get input from people and in the towns. They'll get money out of this. Find out how much each cities will get.

JN—And get it set up for the primary and if it fails, we can have another try in November.

AH—So basically, Sheriff, you've got less than 11 months to get things going about this. Thanks for bringing this up. We look forward to having more meetings about this.

**26:25**—AH—It's 9:25, but we can do comments now.  
No public comments.

**29:40**—SK—Good morning. I'm Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Manager.

SK—CPR and AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) classes are scheduled in August. If anybody wants to join it, let me know.

SK—The AED machines are now available so I have a pretty firm price—\$1,327.90 each. We talked about getting two machines—one for each floor of the court house, but I reached out to the Risk Pool and they'll pay up to \$3,000. So we can get four machines for about the price of two. The other two machines—one would go in this building and another in the prosecutor/juvenile building.

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JN—I'm for that.

AH—Me, too.

SK—Great. I'll get going on that.

SK—The Risk Pool conference is this week. CB and I are going. I sent you a list of our current assets based on recent appraisals. Can you review it and tell me if you think something is out of whack?

SK—North Cascades Athletic Club is under new ownership. We'd like to do an MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) for a discounted rate.

SK—Cell phone stipends. A lot of the information on the resolution about it is out of date, so I'd like to correct it. The Department Head has to sign off on an employee getting a stipend. There are only six employees who get one.

SK—The Public Defense requested money for an additional attorney. They're having issues about exceeding case limits at the end of a month. Caused by clearing up the backlog from Covid. Asking for \$120,000 to \$150,000 to get an additional attorney. That's based on the prosecutor's attorneys are getting. Trying to get grant funding to help pay. There's one without much details yet, but it's reimbursable, so we'd have to upfront the cost.

AH—Because everybody will be here tomorrow...

SK—Do-over tomorrow? OK.

SK—CJTA (RCW 71.24.580 Criminal Justice Treatment Account). I've been working with Okanogan Behavioral Healthcare (OBHC) for additional funds through the HCA (?) grant we have. They've approved \$24,000 to the last year's grant amount. I need a signature on the extension. It's on the Consent Agenda this week.

SK—Therapeutic Court Coordinator position in District Court that's funded by a grant. It's non-bargaining, so it gets a COLA. Darla has requested money to cover the extra wages, but I think this should be a contracted position, so we don't get in this position again. I sent a contract to Esther Milner (Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) to review. It'll be like nurses in the jail. We need to get this going for next year. You'll see that on the Consent Agenda, too.

SK—Lastly, we've got a contract for Pacific Security for the fairgrounds to do security for events there. The cost has been added to the rental cost. We wanted a separate contract for work outside of court security.

JN—Pacific Security has the manpower to do this?

SK—Yes. The people renting the facility will pay 100% of the cost.

**41:25**—AH—I'll phone NP to see if she can move her update up some. There's only the staff meetings left for today.

**1:02:10**—MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management. I sent you a resolution for the overtime for my assistant. Did you receive it?

JN—Yes. But I think we'll discuss it tomorrow when we have a full board.

AH—Has SK already looked at it?

MG—Yes. MG leaves.

**1:04:15**—AH—Pete?

PP—I'm Pete Palmer, Director of Planning. Just a couple of quick announcements today.

PP—There's no Planning Commission meeting this month, so it should be removed from the agenda.

PP—I'm going to the City of Okanogan's public hearing about the Sheriff's Storage and (*inaudible?*).

PP—Tomorrow I'll be in Mazama to meet with the Sub-Area A Advisory Group. We're going to start going through their plan and try to get the low hanging fruit taken care of. I'll go once a month.

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AH—Did we do appoints for the new areas?

PP—Not for Sub areas B & C, but we've appointed people for A.

PP—That's all I've got. Have a good day.

**1:06:40**—AH—I'll give it about ten more minutes and if there's no more staff, we can call it a day.

JN—Perfect.

JN—I just forwarded an email from the DOT. They plan to do more deer fencing.

AH—We need more in the Methow. Good. Two under-crossings.

**1:11:50**—JP—I'm Joe Poulin, Maintenance Supervisor.

JP—We got the HVAC system on the dispatch last week. The brought the wrong (*bell?*) tank. Should be single phase instead of three phase. They're bringing another one on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

AH—Is the funding in place to pay for it? Could you double check and see what fund it's being taken out of?

JP—I'll check.

JP—We're going to fix the leaky irrigation pipe at the justice center tomorrow.

JP—We exchanged the lift for a taller one to get up to the parapets on the court house. This phase should be done in a week or week and a half. It's looking good.

JP—That's all. Questions?

JP and AH discuss a repair involving angle iron.

**11:18:45**—That's all the major players, so I'll adjourn us until 9:00 Tuesday morning.

BOCC adjourns at 10:19.