

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday January 2, 2024, AM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC, District 1
Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2
Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC Chairman, District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ) – 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

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:

Jon Neal Elected BOCC Chair, Andy Hover elected Vice Chair.

No Public Comment.

Discussion about how to support Public Lands: wildfire, forest management, wildlife management.

Finance: some policy changes into the new year, still balancing things out from yearend- 2023, state audit happening, roll out of new software going well with a few issues that have been resolved.

Risk Management: Horse barn “damage” claim.

Sheriff and Undersheriff not understanding the budget process timelines, and unhappy about not being notified of final budget, also not getting staff requested – upgrading deputy to lieutenant with commensurate pay – may use stipend for extra duties, also animal control position not approved/funded – but it is not off the table. Approved Resolution upgrading some salaries due to minimum wage increase.

9:00

Nominations and election of BOCC Chair and Vice Chair. JN voted in as Chairman of the Board with AH as Vice Chairman.

9:15

No Public Comment

Board discusses request for County to be part of a group of Counties to establish a building/organization in Washington DC to lobby for Counties regarding public lands. So far, Okanogan County has not chosen to participate,

AH and JN wonder what is really in it for us (OK County).

CB sees this as being a collection place for information.

AH – But in what political rights?

AH goes on to say that he would like to manage our forests. I like public lands and I'd rather not drill on public lands. My viewpoint is one of proper management. Don't pillage the land.

AH – I can see where the management could be better. The forest management on the Loup looks rather sparse. That might not be the best.

CB adds that Public lands are our national heritage and he has worked in forestry in the past. CB remembers talking about corporations owning forest land.

JN brings up the meat production aspect of grazing on public lands.

9:30

Discussion – Roundtable finance committee:

Auditor -Cari Hall (CH), Treasurer -Pam Johnson(PJ), Finance Manager -Lisa Schreckengast (LS)

CH explains that she is currently writing up a new asset policy and will bring a draft forward soon.

JN asks what the current interest rate is for county investments. PJ – the interest rate is 5.50%

PJ – everything is still balancing out.

AH would like to go through beginning balances in each fund to find major differences, especially for funds that are really tight.

9:33

CH – the State Auditor is currently doing an audit and will be scheduling an exit review. There will be 2 findings; dis-barred vendors, and some recommendations regarding deposits and dollar amounts on contracts, segregation of duties, and small and attractive assets.

CH – we will also be looking at different software for tracking.

CH – about current software rollout; spacing it out, not doing it all at once like the vendor would prefer. This works best for us. There have been one or two bumps but we are doing well. Fixing any issues that arise.

PJ explains her office continues to be doing year end things.

9:49

Some discussion regarding how to vacate roads/land that is not usable. (*I believe this is in relation to an easement needed/requested by a property owner in the Methow Valley.*)

10:07

LJ brings up e-mail from architect, Cortner for the Justice Building site. There are some documents to sign regarding CUP application and SEPA process.

10:30

Shelley Keitzman (SK) HR/ Risk Manager in to update the Board on the Horse Barn claim. Will be turning this over to Chuck (Fairgrounds manager) to get the claim finished.

10:59

After reviewing and making changes to the minutes from 12/ 18th & 19th, and the 12/26. Minutes were approved as amended.

11:00

Sheriff -Paul Budrow (PB) and Undersheriff – Dave Yarnell (DY) are in to discuss their budget.

PB - we're upset because we were never told what our budget was. We hadn't heard anything and the public knew about it before we did.

AH explains the budgeting process begin with the need for the public hearing and posting on the BOCC website. AH – All departments needed to be available if we need for questions, etc.

We removed nothing from your budgets except the cars which will be done differently.

DY wanted to know how the new P/T Search and Rescue coordinator is funded. AH -through the contingency fund and project dollars. We have \$800,000 in the Contingency fund with \$600,000 going to public safety. Of course, that includes the jails.

PB – We didn't get the positions that we requested. We wanted to increase a Deputy position to Lieutenant, also Administration Sgt and Animal Control officer. We lost money from the Registered Sex Offender registration grant.

AH states that the Board was unable to authorize money for more positions, but the Animal Control officer is still on the table. He asks PB what the pay difference for the Lieutenant would be versus a Sgt?

DY – The average pay for a Sergeant is \$75,948, and the Lieutenant would be \$84,678 per year.

AH explains that right now, our budget is balanced on the 2024 budget & revenue.

AH – If that position upgrade is something you really want, maybe we could look at doing a Stipend.

PB continues to state that he feels as though his staffing requests went unnoticed, and he felt that he was told to come back, and was never communicated with after their last budgeting session.

JN asks about the duties regarding the Sex Offender Registration grant.

AH explains to DY and PB that the grant for \$88,000 was for deliverables that you now have to attribute to something. PB doesn't understand that is where the wages are budgeted.

PB – Do you mean to tell me that the Sheriff's office is over budget?

AH -no

JN – Another way to look at it, Are you willing to demote your staff person once the grant is no longer issued? PB- Yes

AH – I would recommend a stipend, rather than demotion or upgrade right now. AH states that he is willing to look at a stipend.

CB acknowledges that it would have been better to have had this discussion before the budget was completed.

Once again, PB stated that he felt blindsided and he wasn't called back in to meet with the BOCC

DY explains that the vehicle fund is down to \$150,000. DY will be doing one vehicle at a time.

What about the money for the Search & Rescue position? & there is no money in the budget for animal control officer. AH – we thought animal control officer was one of the more important items, and it is not off the table. We need to continue a discussion about this.

CB apologizes once again. AH admits that he misses steps and he will take responsibility for that.

PB understands the BOCC has their job to do, but felt that in this budgeting cycle, he got punched in the gut. PB feels that their staffing requests were/are nominal. 2 deputies and a move to a lieutenant.

AH explains that one staff member costs \$110,00, so 2 would be \$220,000.

DY explains this was in relation to wanting to find ways to promote to retain staff.

AH states that retention is another discussion but suggests that PB meet with HR and draft a stipend agreement for now.

PB – 'With the way society's going, we do not have the staff to meet the mandates. I want to make sure

I am protecting the county from liabilities.

AH notes that people are always asking him why taxes are going up. Legally, we can only go up a certain amount.

DY has more questions regarding the Search & Rescue position. A portion of those wages are based on Title III funds – what else? AH states Special Projects, I believe. Also, Current Expense.

PB asks about mental health contractor in jail? AH answers that the person is a designated counselor from OBHC.

AH asks DY to work with HR on getting the stipend written up.

11:42

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Consent Agenda as written:

1. CDBG – Request #16-Public Services/ General admin – Community Action Council
2. CDBD -Request #34 – Admin – Subsistence payments/Food Bank, Community Action Council.
3. Ratify Resolution 212-2023 Budget CECR – CECS, \$9500.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 1-2024 increasing some salaried staff due to minimum wage increasing to \$16.28.

11:48

Adjourned. No afternoon session or Wednesday session.