

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
12/21/2020 PM

JD—Jim DeTro, BOCC chair, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC vice-chair, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, District 2
LJ—Lalena Johns-clerk to the Commissioners
CH—Cari Hall, County Auditor
LM—Leah McCormick, County Treasurer
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning and Development
AM—Amy Martin, Okanogan Conservation District, Conservation Director
JP—Jim Potts
ZK—Zak Kennedy
HR—Superior Court Judge Henry Rawson

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/Commissioners/Minutes%202014/March%204,%202014.htm>

The time stamps refer to the times on the AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date at <https://okanogancounty.org/avcapture.html> To locate items in real time, the clock on the wall in the AV Capture screen can be helpful.

Summary of significant discussions:

After some discussion of minor issues, Commissioners pass the 2021 Budget. Afterwards, they discuss funding options for an emergency reserve account for Emergency Management.

PP updates Commissioners on water meters in WRIA 48. AM presents a PowerPoint presentation about the Five Year Report of the VSP. Much of what she says is too faint to hear.

Commissioners pass a resolution allocating CARES Act funding to various budgets.

Commissioners hear update from two lobbyists before the Legislative session starts in Olympia. The three main issues they see for this session are carbon, new taxes to cover the shortfall and criminal justice reform.

2:53:50—Continued public hearing, Okanogan County 2021 Budget Resolution 183-2020
Commissioners, Cari Hall (County Auditor) and Leah McCormick (County Treasurer) discuss several items in the 2021 budget, including dues paid to professional organizations such as NACo (National Association of Counties) and Washington Association of Counties (WSAC). CH also mentions several formula errors she made and has now corrected.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
12/21/2020 PM

3:09:35—CB asks how a department can accrue a reserve fund. This is the same question Maurice Goodall raised last week at Monday’s BOCC meeting. CH, LM and the commissioners discuss various ways this could happen.

3:24:00—AH moves to adopt the 2021 budget. Resolution 183-2020. Passes 3-0.

3:30:10—PP gives Planning Department update. A request was made by the Methow Watershed Council (MWC) for water meters. Mike Fort researched the issue and came up with several issues that need to be decided.

1. Privacy for the public. If the county does the metering, the bill is a public record and people could see how much water others are using. If the MWC does the metering, it’s done by the address, not the resident, and there’s a little more privacy.
2. Metering would require one full-time employee.
3. Meters rely on cell towers and that hasn’t been a problem so far.
4. The meters use batteries with a ten year life span. However, the battery is turned on when the meter is shipped by the manufacturer. If the MWC orders in bulk and keeps most of them in reserve, the batteries will be running and then may not have a very long life when they’re actually metering water.
5. They now have 8 of their 12 installed. The other four will be installed soon.
6. They’re waiting for a \$100,000 grant to buy more meters.
7. The Building Department says it’s averaging 60-70 permits per year in Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 48 (Methow Watershed).

3:32:40—Amy Martin of Okanogan Conservation District presents a PowerPoint slide show to update the Commissioners on the 5 year report of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). The report is due December 28, 2020. Her voice was very faint for most of the presentation.

3:34:00—Slide 1, Introduction

3:34:43—Slide 2, VSP background

3:35:57—Slide 3, Five year report due December 28.

3:37:10—Slide 4, Three main components.

3:37:58—Slide 5, Protection Benchmarks

3:41:40—Slide 6, Protection Benchmarks: What they mean.

3:43:09—Slide 7, Protection benchmarks sorted by WRIA.

3:45:25—Slide 8, Effectiveness monitoring. (HCAs are areas on the landscape between which patterns of connectivity are evaluated.)

3:47:38—Slide 9, Effectiveness monitoring

3:50:33—Slide 10, Adaptive Management Recommendations benchmarks

3:51:05—Slide 11, Adaptive Management Recommendations. (At this point, LJ asked AM to pull the microphone closer, and it becomes much easier to hear what she’s saying.

3:53:05—Slide 12, Adaptive Management Recommendations

3:54:38—Slide 13, Stay Tuned. AM mentions that she hasn’t seen the VSP budget for the next biennium, but it’s expected to be funded at a level similar to the past.

3:55:15—Slide 14, Protective Benchmarks

3:58:30—PP and AM leave.

AH asks LJ if she’s received the BARS codes (Budgeting, Accounting and Reporting System). She has received enough of them.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
12/21/2020 PM

AH—We have to schedule another supplemental for Probation to be able to pay its payroll. They discuss how to do it and schedule another hearing.

LJ gets more BARS codes from the Auditor's office for a public hearing that will be held in 15 minutes.

4:22:20—Continued public hearing for supplemental appropriations. No public comment.

AH to CB—Everything is back in its correct place except for a small amount of (too faint to hear).

CB—Move to approve Resolution 173-2020 allocating CARES Act funding to various budgets. Passes 3-0.

4:51:25—Legislative update by Jim Potts and Zak Kennedy

ZK—The legislative session hasn't started, but we want to give you a rundown on what we've learned and hear what your priorities are.

CB—I have a question for Zak. Superior Court Judge Rawson is here and he's interested in the Uniform Guardianship Act. It was passed but we hear the legislature may relax the timeline. It's an unfunded mandate.

ZK—We'll need to get a few weeks into the session to learn about this. We've already seen what the governor's done in relaxing timelines.

CB—I'll ask again, but I just want to make sure you've got it on your radar.

HR—The Superior Courts Judges Association is working with Senator Pedersen to stall off implementation of the Act until July 1. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) will make some money available to Superior Courts to help with costs.

ZK.—Here's our spiel. It's pretty short. Everything this year will be on line and digital. The system has been tested, but I don't know if it was tested at full load. We'll see. It'll be different for us because we'll have to lean on legislative aides real hard. We can't just talk to them because it's remote. The greatest superpower that lobbyists have is lurking, but we can't lurk anymore, and they can just avoid our calls. So we'll have lots of meetings with aides instead of members.

ZK—Per the governor there are three priorities for this session. It's basically the same agenda as the last 3 ½ years.

1. Carbon.
2. New taxes to cover the substantial shortfall. There's talk of a capital gains tax.
3. Criminal justice reform. This doesn't mean the unfunded mandate of indigent defense. It means Law Enforcement Officers do special training, body cams, civil liabilities even if you do anything outside the code of conduct or outside the department's procedures. The training costs will fall on the counties.

ZK—As for carbon, this is nothing new. They've been working on cap and tax, or cap and trade or carbon credit. Whatever shape it takes, they're really looking at a disproportionate adverse effect on rural areas. So we'll have a lot of education to do. A lot of the legislative aides are new, younger. Many of them representing Seattle, Tacoma, Bellevue, the I-5 corridor, and probably have never been out of the city. They don't know what it's like in Okanogan County or even what it's like in Spokane.

ZK—So we'll have to do a lot of education. Everything creates carbon. Everything touches law enforcement and they'll tax us as much as they can get away with.

ZK—Inslee wants to put in a new agency—Social Equity or whatever it is. The stated purpose is to look for institutional racism throughout institutions in Washington from local policies up to state agencies. It's my personal opinion that it would be a complete witch hunt and cause all kinds of issues. If you're talking diversity, in extremely rural areas where there are a couple of hundred people, there isn't much diversity. What if it's seen as institutional racism if there's only old white guys in an area?

ZK—We're going to be watching for the broad, sweeping strokes these people are going to try to do. A lot of them have never been out of the city and don't know about the idiosyncrasies out here.

AH—Let them know Commissioner Hover drives 100 miles/day to get to work and back.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
12/21/2020 PM

CB—You also might add that they do get out of the city and they're all in Commissioner Hover's district.

ZK—Just be glad you're not Chelan County.

CB—Unless we had their budget.

AH—Yeah. That'd be nice.

ZK—We'll especially need to look out of the capital gains tax. It has a hard impact on rural property and rural residents. People in rural areas tend to have a lot of property.

ZK—One tool we have to fight them is the unfunded mandate. With the ballot box decision. (?) Unfunded mandates were identified but then they still owed for them. This is a tool we haven't had before, and we need to make the legislators aware that we have this tool now. There are a lot of new members.

ZK—Again, just my personal opinion, but I think the counties ought to get together and talk about the unfunded mandate of indigent defense.

AH—I'd like to know what other counties are paying for this. Ours is about 4.5%. That's \$1,200,000.

ZK—You're right in the ballpark. The average is between 4 and 8 percent. Franklin county, though, had a couple of really big cases. Grant County had one as well.

AH—The 4.5% is just defense money.

ZK—And also doesn't include medical expenses in the jail.

CB—Well, I hope they treat everybody equally with new process of communications in the legislature.

ZK—They're still wrestling with open meetings with the caucuses. They can't exempt themselves from open meetings so they're trying to figure out what to do.

ZK—One big change. Senator Schoesler (9th Leg. Dist.) is stepping down (as Senate GOP leader).

JP—He'll be replaced by John Braun (20th Leg. Dist.).

JD—Is that good?

JP—Maybe. Schoesler was never the friend of counties. We're looking to make inroads with Braun.

JP—Federal agency started delisting endangered species. We'll watch that.

ZK—Any questions?

Commissioners—Nope. We'll wait and see.

ZK—Let us know if you have a question.

JP—Maybe an upside of the virtual session is that you commissioners can testify on a bill without the long trip over there. But there's still a lot of details to work out on how they're going to make it work. Do they even have the bandwidth?

JP—This will be my 25th session coming up. There's not much reason to go over there. Most of the legislators won't be there and the aides will be working from home.

JP—OK. Good to talk to you.

Commissioners—Thanks.

Adjourn at 3:55