

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners  
12/8/2020 PM

JD—Jim DeTro, BOCC chair, District 3  
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC vice-chair, District 1  
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, District 2--absent  
MW—Mike Worden, Sheriff's Department  
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency 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/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:**

*Mike Worden opens four bids received for a Radio System consultant.*

*Discussion of assistance programs available for ranchers who suffered losses due to the Palmer and Cold Springs Fires.*

*Note: approximately the first 20 minutes of this meeting was not recorded by AV Capture because of a technical problem.*

**Bid opening.**

Mike Worden, Sheriff's Department, opens the four bids received for Radio System consultant. After the bids are opened, they'll be evaluated by MW, CB and two others.

1. CSI Telecommunications, Inc., Novato, CA \$296,658
2. Vigilance Consulting Group, Sterling, VA \$397,712
3. Adcomm Engineering, Woodinville, WA \$836,900
4. Televate, Vienna, VA \$78,042

MW—We'll evaluate the bids and report back.

**Discussion with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), and Conservation District.** Most of this meeting was recorded by AV Capture.

**00:00**—MG—In November, the BOCC gave me a #1 priority to look at the cattle situation for the Palmer and Cold Springs fires. I've brought three people to talk about the programs their organizations can provide:

1. Celeste Acord from the FSA
2. Sarah Troutman from NRCS
3. Craig Nelson from the Conservation district.

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MG—I met with ranchers right after the fires to see what people needed. Mostly hay and fencing. I also met with Washington Emergency Management and the state’s Agriculture Department, but they had little to offer.

**7:10**—Celeste Acord, County Executive Director of the FSA. She lists the programs available.

1. Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). Provides money to replace infrastructure such as fences. It’s one of our more popular programs because it has cost sharing for loss of infrastructure.
2. Emergency Haying and Grazing. Few ranchers in the county qualify for this program.
3. Emergency Forest Restoration Project. It’s received no applications.
4. Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP). It’s a catch-all program for losses not addressed by other programs. It also helps with feed and grazing losses.
5. Emergency Loan Program.
6. Livestock Forage Disaster Program.
7. Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Covers loss of livestock above normal mortality.
8. Crop Disaster Program. It’s similar to crop insurance if you can’t buy a policy on the open market.
9. Tree Assistance. We haven’t had any applications.

Beyond these programs, there are additional programs related to the Corona virus. There were two food assistance programs which disbursed millions of dollars to agricultural producers alone.

Finally, there was a private response from the long term recovery group at the Fairgrounds.

**22:00**—Sarah Troutman, NRCS District Conservationist.

1. The primary program is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The sign-up deadline has just passed.
2. The biggest assistance is the Deferred Grazing Payment. It pays \$6.57/acre/year for loss of pasture if the rancher agrees not to graze it. It runs for two years, but the first payment isn’t until next winter.
3. Financial Assistance for fencing. FSA handles boundary fences and NRCS handled internal fencing. It pays \$3.41/foot but we’ve had few applicants.
4. Cover crops. We can give an early start waiver to cover cropland, but you have to wait until spring to be paid.

One of our problems is that smaller producers don’t know about us, so it helps if the Commissioners keep pointing people towards us.

**26:30**—Craig Nelson, Executive Director, Okanogan County Conservation District.

We’re predominated grant funded. In previous fires, we received grants that was funded by the legislature. In 2014, we requested \$80,000 for immediate assistance and received the money in just a few weeks. In 2015, we had \$500,000. This year, they’ve only been granted \$10,000. Also, we renegotiated some grants from the DOE and others to use the money for fire recovery. So we got \$25,000 of direct technical assistance. We’ve tried to let people know about the programs in FSA and NRCS.

There are costs for noxious weeds, hazard tree removal and livestock water facilities. We’ve submitted requests to the state, but don’t know if they’ll be funded. I’ve had conversations with legislators but it’s a tough time.

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**32:20**—MG speaks again, but he's too faint to hear. Eventually, the three speakers leave. The Commissioners talk with LJ, but again, it's too faint to hear. There is conversation with a woman about Covid procedures and temperature taking.

Very faintly, the Commissioners continue to conduct what seems to be routine business until they adjourn.