

Okanogan Board of County Commissioners
05/27/2020

JD—Jim DeTro

AH—Andy Hover

CB—Chris Branch

LJ—Lalena Johns-clerk to the Commissioners

LJones—Community Health Director, Okanogan County Public Health

RH-D—Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, Economic Alliance

This is a paraphrasing of conversations by one of several volunteer citizen note takers and published on the website of Okanogan County Watch (countywatch.org) Any writer's comments or explanations are in italics. For officially approved minutes of Board of Commissioner meetings, normally published at a later date, see www.okanogancounty.org.

Summary of significant discussions:

County variance to move to Phase 2—*The commissioners hope to hear from the Governor at 2:30 this afternoon.*

Economic Alliance—*CB met with the Economic Alliance this morning and discussed loans and grants available to local businesses. JD asks RH-D to contact a person who has found the PPP grant application to be very difficult.*

Okanogan Community Action Council—*The council has asked the Commissioners if they would submit a comment that they shouldn't be the grant administrators for the shelter grant opportunity.*

JD—Did we hear about our variance?

AH—I think we'll hear at 2:30 today.

CB—I got that email, too. They may ask for more info.

JD—He (Unsure who JD is referring to. Gov. Inslee? Someone else?) thinks he can't get a fair trial in Eastern Washington and wants to move it to Thurston Co. Chelan & Douglas Counties are suing. Bob Ferguson, (Washington State Attorney General) is trying to change it to Olympia but the judge said no.

JD—He says he can't get a fair trial in Okanogan County because we kicked him out 35 years or so ago.

JD—Other news. The Roadhouse 97 Restaurant, near the Medical Center is closing for good. We can't allow this guy to ruin our businesses.

AH—Laurie's on the line.

LJones—I haven't heard anything yet. I pled my case again this morning with Secretary of Health, John Wiesman. The governor will talk today at 2:30, but I don't have anything from the Secretary that indicated a change. I'm getting frustrated. There are 200 cases in Douglas County and 200 cases in Chelan County. That shouldn't matter to our variance. They're looking at our variance as a model.

AH—Thanks for the update.

LJones—I told the Secretary (of Health, John Wiesman) that our outbreak is in one small area of the county and many small businesses have a plan and it's unfair for them to remain closed while Walmart is open. I believe he's trying to help us.

LJones—It's very unfortunate about the Roadhouse. What bothers me is the blatant disregard from people coming into the county. Sally Ranzau (Mayor of Winthrop) called yesterday about the measures she is putting up. Someone went and talked to people that have been gathering over the weekend. I hope they got the message that this isn't helping businesses to open up.

AH—People are asking lots of questions in comments. They want information about how to get unemployment. One person said she can't look for a job because the businesses where she could work are not open. It's not sustainable.

LJones—I had a client who worked at the Roadhouse and he was told you can get a job somewhere else, but they can't. Being denied (unemployment benefits?) makes no sense to me. We *know* we have small businesses that can do what it takes. I was passionate in my pleading with the Secretary. It's not fair to penalize us for a few cases.

JD—There was the big unemployment fraud situation.

AH—Someone applied as me, and commissioners aren't even eligible for unemployment.

LJones—Information for two of our employees was used.

LJones—leaves the call.

AH & JD—Nothing to do now but wait.

CB—Kittitas, Thurston and a third county got passed. We're one of 11 counties not in Phase 2.

JD—My biggest fear is migration from the West side on Memorial Day weekend.

CB—I talked to the Economic Alliance this morning. Several businesses received grants from local sources and some from the state. We can use CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) money to help, but we need to prioritize. My priority is to make sure we can do contact tracing to get our variance.

JD—And whatever we can do to get the money. Connie from the Club Tavern qualified for PPP (Payroll Protection Program) money--\$85,000—but there were too many restrictions. It was too hard to comply.

CB—Roni, can you comment?

RH-D—We have lots of people getting PPP loans. It's one of the best tools in our toolbox. That program is pretty straightforward. If you spend 75% on payroll and 25% on overhead, you can get 100% loan forgiveness. Others ask for loans without forgiveness. It's a 1% loan. If you have really high overhead, you can use this money because the loan is so cheap.

AH-Thanks Roni. Good explanation.

JD—I'll have to ask Connie at the Club what she found so difficult.

RD-H—Have her give me a call and I can walk her through it.

JD—OK. Sounds good.

CB—I heard from Lael Duncan (CEO of Okanogan Community Action Council) re: the new shelter grant opportunities. The BOCC has to be administrators of the grant and Lael is pushing back. We can comment until June 4. I'll give them some feedback. If it's OK with AH and JD, I'll write an email myself. Lael says it makes no sense for the county and the cities to have the BOCC administer the money.

JD—I agree. We passed it on before. I don't want to encumber Lanie.

AH—I agree too.

CB—With the Economic Alliance, have you been able to see the tool kit that Roni sent out? It helps us to move to Phase 2, (or at least Phase 1.5). We need to show businesses doing this makes a case for the variance.

AH—I think we should put this on the Commissioners' website. Can Lanie put the PDF of the Economic Alliance toolkit on the front page of the County's website?

LJ—Yes.

JD—Anything else?

CB & AH—No. Meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.