

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, April 12, 2021 AM

JD—Jim DeTro, BOCC, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, vice-chair, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, chair, District 2 (absent during the morning session)
ZK—Zak Kennedy, lobbyist with Pott & Associates
LD—Lael Duncan, Exec Director, Okanogan County Community Action Council
Kevin Black, Nespelem Valley Electrical Co-op
Scott Vejraska, Okanogan County PUD
Mindy Morris—Okanogan County PUD
David Gottula, Okanogan County Electrical Co-op

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:

Commissioners get the legislative update from the lobbyist, Zak Kennedy.

Commissioners, employees of three electrical utilities and Lael Duncan of Community Action discuss potential help for utilities and their ratepayers who are in arrears due to Covid.

02:40—AH—I've asked Lael Duncan (CEO of Okanogan County Community Action Council) to join the discussion about bill payers being in arrears for their electric bills.

04:30—Commissioners discuss the surplus auction held on Saturday. It did very well, despite cold weather. The take was approximately \$140,000 with 22% or so going to the auctioneer.

10:50—Commissioners discuss changes to the agenda. CB has another meeting at 2:00 PM. AH proposes that on Tuesday, they move the consent agenda up and adjourn the BOCC at noon. Then they'll be done after the Board of Health monthly meeting in the afternoon.

12:35—Discussion of irrigation at the Fairgrounds. CB mentions that there needs to be an earnest conversation with Maintenance about turning on the water (both domestic and irrigation). The irrigation waters should be turned on when irrigation begins. The domestic water should be turned on as soon as the system won't freeze.

18:35—CB updates LJ on the changes he and AH have made to the agenda.

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19:50—AH says the commissioners and Tanya Craig (Human Resources) will go into executive session for 5 minutes to discuss the performance of an employee. (RCW 42.30.110 1(g)).

34:15—Zak Kennedy, the county’s lobbyist, gives the legislative update.

- The legislature is in the last couple of weeks for the session.
- It’s still difficult for people to “get on the same page”. A majority of the legislators are over 60 and there are issues with technology.
- We’re hoping lots of bills die in concurrence.
- The state has 3% more money than ever, but it’s still talking tax hikes.
- Sen. Hobbs (D, LD40—Lake Stevens) has a transportation budget with 5 revenue sources that won’t work. They either won’t raise any money or are unconstitutional.
- Discussion of a Rural Economic Development bill
- HB 13323, a long term care bill—effectively an income tax with proceeds establishing a trust fund.
- CB asks about HB 1168. ZK—It deals with forest fire damages. It was unopposed. I expect it to be just fine.
- CB asks about the Highway 97 safe crossing. ZK—I think it’s going to remain in both budgets.
- CB asks about HB 1232—Planning for Affordable Housing under the Growth Management Act and how this might affect Okanogan County.

ZK’s update concludes.

1:00:15—Commissioners discuss the electrical system at the RV park at the Fairgrounds. Naomi Peasley (Fairgrounds Manager) needs to know who to call if there’s an electrical problem.

1:06:55—AH met with Parker from Aspect Consulting about the assumptions they used when making their report about the number of exempt wells in WRIA 48. The county will use this information when it submits its first report to the Department of Ecology.

1:25:40—Commissioners correct the minutes. They also discuss ways to get people to remove junked cars from their yards.

1:56:15—Discussion with Nespelam Valley Electrical Co-op, Okanogan County Electrical Co-op, Okanogan County PUD and Okanogan County Community Action Council about Covid, rate payers in arrears and the American Recovery Plan (ARP). All three utilities have people in arrears. Nespelam is owed approximately \$103,000, the PUD has 216 customers owing \$144,000 and the Okanogan Co-op has just 2 customers owing approximately \$13,000 because of covid-related issues.

Commissioners, utility representatives and LD of Community Action try to develop a smooth process to help people who qualify for help with their electric bills.

Some people don’t know about the help available from Community Action. Others don’t have the on-line resources to apply for help and applying with paper documents sent through the mail takes much longer. Some people are intimidated by the paperwork.

Solutions include:

- Community Action staff coming to the utilities offices to help rate payers with the paperwork.

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- More outreach by the utilities, such as a brief description of help being offered by Community Action along with their contact information included with the electric bill.
- The county giving money to the utilities while still complying with all the accounting requirements.

3:13:10—Adjourn for lunch.