

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

JD—Jim DeTro, BOCC, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, Chair, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, -Vice Chair, District 2
LJ—Lalena Johns-clerk to the Commissioners
AC—Aaron Culp, Undersheriff
SB—Susan Baur, Courts
LD—Lael Duncan, CEO, Okanogan Community Action Council
JS—Jennifer Short, Director of Programs, Okanogan Community Action Council

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Summary of significant discussions:

Commissioners discuss salary increases for several positions. At the end of the day, after people in HR gather more data, they vote to have the head of HR write resolutions to raise the salary of the Deputy Clerk of the Board from Step 18 to Step 24, and give all non-bargaining employees a 2% raise. They also discuss strategies for finding funding sources for unfunded mandates, such as indigent defense, and for increasing county revenues in general.

LJ is asked to reconfirm the prices in Code Publishers' proposal.

The Commissioners discuss how to deal with development in the Tunk Valley, specifically, availability of physical water and strategies for increasing minimum lot sizes.

Okanogan Community Action Council asks the BOCC for an additional \$125,000/year for two years—2022 and 2023. The BOCC asks them to provide more details about how they reached that figure.

CB shows his "wish list" spread sheet with details of numerous groups that have asked the Commissioners for funding from ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) or other sources.

Commissioners approve a resolution outlining the county's policy for administrative leave for employees who are advised not to be in the office because of a positive Covid test.

Discussion of wages--Commissioners

00:08:03:00—CB will be late and AH and JD begin without him.

AH—to LJ—I see there's a big discrepancy between your salary and the average salary for Clerks of the Board. I looked at what we're paying the Chief Deputies for the elected officials—\$5,658. 85% of the

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

average of the Clerk of the Board would be \$6,246/month. We're trying to figure out where our pay is sitting. We have to bring wages up which is difficult. Right now \$6,200 is about what elected officials—Assessor, Treasurer, Commissioners—are getting paid. I'm willing to put the Clerk of the Board back up with the elected officials' Chief Deputies, because the 85% is below that. Deputy Clerk of the Board is below. That. Average of cities would be a better comparison because if people left, they'd go to the various cities in the area. Average pay for Pateros, Oroville, Twisp and Omak. (You didn't get Okanogan.) Average pay for those four is \$4,478. I'd be willing to raise the pay up to that because they're like positions.

JD—I'm following.

AH—to AC—did you get numbers for Chief Civil Deputies for the Sheriff's Office?

AC—Last week. I'd proposed to raise the Chief Civil Deputy salary by 3% because of comparables found by the HR department. We're at 82% of the high and 3% will put us at 85%. Annual amount is \$65,770.

AH—\$5,480/month. In line with \$5,658.

AC—An increase of \$1,970/month.

AH—The only other one we don't have is District Court Administrator. Assume raising her pay to \$5,658 would put it in line, too. Also need to talk about wages for attorneys. In my opinion, they're \$10,000 short of what they should get.

AH—Any questions?

AC—AWC (Association of Washington Cities) comparables are published in March each year, so this year's haven't come out yet. But they're going to be close.

AH—Other than the Prosecuting Attorney, there are seven attorneys. We commissioners know we have to pay people because we're losing people to other counties.

SB—Other counties do less work, but have someone who get a lot more pay.

AH—Try to keep raises in 2% range. If we get the 1% property tax increase, we can pay for that, but with the CPI (Consumer Price Index) now, we're falling behind. 5 or 6%. We have to pay people what they have to be paid, but it's hard. If Indigent Defense was paid for in this county, our wages would not be an issue. It's over \$1,000,000/year we pay for it. That would go a long way to help other people's wages.

JD—We've campaigned for cannabis money to come back for Indigent Defense, but don't have it.

AH—LJ did a salary comparison. Tanya (Everett, of HR) is looking at the salaries for Chief Deputies salaries for the other offices. I have no problem moving the District Court Administrator and the Chief Deputies up, and moving our Deputy Clerk by \$700-\$800, but I want to get more information and try to get this done today.

AH—to SB—If you will get the info for the attorneys. It's hard to get attorneys to come here from far away.

AH—I'll go talk to Tanya about getting the salary information we need.

JD & LJ discuss changes to the minutes.

00:39:55—AH & JD discuss Canadian trucker blockade with regards to GoFundMe.

LJ—Is the resolution for the administrative leave for the Treasurer's Office apply only to that office? Because we had someone who had to go home, too. Same issue.

AH—I'll check with Tanya.

AH—returns. We're going to change the resolution to a county-wide policy.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

Discussion of changes to the agenda to accommodate PP's request to talk about the marijuana moratorium extension ordinance. She will come in tomorrow at 11:00 AM. And also maybe move Tanya's update in the morning. The commissioners will then be able to go straight to the Board of Health meeting Tuesday at 1:30.

Continue to discuss changes to the minutes. AH wants to be sure that the BOCC is informed of changes in rental contracts at the Fairgrounds. That makes the contracts part of the Commissioners' record.

1:02:30—CB arrives.

AH and CB discuss HB—1792 is about hydrogen production via electrolysis, not burning fossil fuels.

01:09:20—AH updates CB about the discussion of wages that occurred before CB arrived.

AH—LJ had proposed these wages for the Clerk and the Deputy. Wanted Tanya to look at it to see how they compare. AC did wage comparison for Chief Civil Deputy and I said \$5,600 is appropriate. Tanya is working in District Court Administrator's wages to see where they fall. We may hear squawking if that happens. Deputy Clerk of the Board—I can't justify 85% of the Clerk's salary—so I used Pateros, Oroville, Twisp and Omak. The average for those is what I can justify. That's my thought process. Tanya's working on numbers. SB is working on numbers for attorneys. I'd like to get this resolved today.

AH—Also, there was a proposal about Code Publishing. (Can't find it, so LJ sends it to him.)

AH—There are a lot of people sending us statements about development in the Tunk. We need to address that.

CB—People in the Tunk Valley are talking about that.

AH—We need to address it. With moratorium expired, we propose a permanent subdivision ban. Can we do that?

AH—We could make it so that the minimum lot size is 40 acres.

CB—They do that in places where agriculture lands is valuable. Called "no net loss, no net gain".

AH—Is there any incentives we can give for parcel consolidations? Does the Assessor know?

CB—Maybe the open space element. I don't know the rules for this very well. We could have the Assessor come and talk to us.

AH—Remember when I said the economy is junk? I didn't mean people were doing stuff badly. I meant that we can't attract more business. What tools do we commissioners have? Can't do tax incentives.

CB—In cities we would do utility tax, industrial use. If we owned property, we could do pro-rating for start-ups.

CB—The county could join with cities to do needed infrastructure. Roni (Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director of the Economic Alliance) would know about that. She gets updates for the Department of Commerce. We could identify those places. You could do the SEPA before, so the business has to do only the project level SEPA.

01:22:46—Going back to the Tunk, I think we should talk to the Planning Director and say I don't know if there's physically available water up there to do subdivisions.

CB—I talked to Jim Soriano about that and I've talked to others about adequate water.

AH and CB discuss water availability on property away from streams.

AH—Look at wells' dates and depth. Did they used to be 60' and now they're 90'. Would future subdivision impair other people's water?

AH—The only legal way to do this is to tell the Planning Commission we want it rezoned to 60 acre minimum or whatever. Or say we're unsure that water is physically available and new subdivisions may impair existing wells.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

CB—Discusses watershed issues—WRIA 49 plan that included Tunk basin. USGS did a quick study on four of the watersheds. Gina McCoy did a follow-up on those watersheds. Look at those studies. Look at road systems and cost of delivering services to the area. You can look at cost of growth vs cost of agriculture. Grazing and Wildlife. And you've got justification to do what you want to do.

AH—Look at zoning. 160 acres was a homestead way back when. Maybe that's what we should do.

CB—It didn't work well. Lots of abandoned homesteads. Grazing maybe, including public lands. Plus what at the markets looking like—prices are low.

AH—As a planner, what's the immediate remedy to stop further land divisions up there?

CB—Create a “no further water dependent lots” policy. We could have that as a goal.

AH—In WRIA 49, broke everything down to sub-basins. USGS has divided them up, water-wise.

CB—The other solutions were increase the general lot size or the exempt levels. Remove the intense uses of water that make no sense, like the RV park up around the timberline. There are lots of times that it fills up with RVs that people are living in. Remove those uses. They're the low hanging fruit.

CB—Consider the documented cost of growth vs cost of agriculture. If you get the growth in a city, the tax base changes. It's good to create these strategies with the Assessor.

CB—We need to think where to set the minimum lot size and the exempt levels. And there's the sentiment of people who live there. There are good examples around the country. Western Planners' Council deals with a lot of rural stuff, so it's a good source.

CB—Planning has created a lot of maps that would serve this.

CB—Also partner with PUD and school districts. They have to deliver utilities and school buses up there and it's a challenge.

AH—Looking at a map on his computer.

01:51:10—Public Hearing for Budget Supplemental for Sheriff Fund 001.017. \$22, 110.

AC—This is just an adjustment. What was projected during the budget workshop process, the amount of dispatch fees wasn't enough. Also Stonegarden Grant was larger than expected. This enables us to spend more on reimbursable federal money. Go towards replacing the vehicle that was totaled. Vehicle should be here in two weeks.

AH—Public comments? None.

AH—At some point we'll have unused wages in the Sheriff's Office. Can we discuss using that money the next time instead of doing a supplemental out of contingency reserve?

AC—Absolutely.

CB—Move to approve Resolution 19-2022, authorizing the budget supplemental. Passes 3-0.

AH—Public Hearing is closed.

01:58:40—LJ—This is regarding ARPA. I forwarded to the BOCC the letter from LD of Community Action.

AH—First let's talk about Code Publishing. One-time set-up fee of \$9,900, and \$16.50/page. Will we have to pay this?

LJ—If you recodify, yes. I wasn't involved when Code Publishing was first selected to publish our code. I imagine they've included all the fees.

AH—I didn't read the proposal. So they're talking about set-up fee of \$9,900, \$16.50/page, \$10/code change, legal review of \$3,375. Can you recheck those are the prices? And get us an all-inclusive price for that?

LJ—Will do.

02:07:50—Discussion of ARPA Funding Request for the Community Action Council.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

LD—We really need these funds since we lost the National Guard’s help. We’ve advertised for new workers and we need new replacement equipment but it’s not covered by our traditional funding.

LD—Asking for \$125,000 per year for 2022 and 2023. That’s \$75,000 for salaries, \$25,000 for equipment and \$25,000 for supplies for each year.

JS—We need the staff for curbside deliveries We’re trying to support the other food pantries in the area.

AH and CB say they need to see more information as to how these amounts were settled on.

LD—It’s based on historic performance. They’re estimates. Equipment and supplies funds will be for backfill.

AH—Is this request for increases based on what Community Action is doing for Covid response?

LD Yes.

AH—So I want to understand what’s above and beyond what you normally do. For example—I need one more guy at \$X/hr and we need another forklift or more PPE, etc. I need to know how you got those numbers.

LD—I can give examples of past equipment breakdowns but I can’t predict the future.

AH—Also, this is reimbursable. We reimburse for what you buy, but you have to pay for it first.

LD—We expected it to be reimbursable and to have to justify the expenses.

AH—Can you just give us more details about how the estimates were derived.

JS—I can do that.

LD—JS and I will work on that and get it to you.

02:21:10—CB—One other item *just for our purposes*, I’ve got a collection of proposals and requests in this spread sheet right here. (Shows it on the screen.) They’re all just estimates.

- City of Okanogan \$1,750,000
- Mazama well for FD6 \$100,000
- Okanogan Public Health \$500,000
- Methow Bridge Water line replacement \$591,000
- Community Action Council \$250,000
- Economic Alliance \$300,000
- Long Term Recovery \$300,000
- Okanogan Co Communications \$300,000
- PUD \$200,000
- Justice building \$2,000,000

We have to set a day to go through the list and discuss it.

AH—So, LD, if you can get back to us and we have to look at all the requests we already have. Plus there’s the money for wages. That needs to be added to the list. Is the Coroner’s project on there?

CB—I even put the Mazama well project on the list. Just for me, I think that project is well worth 100% funding. Infrastructure and firefighting capacity.

AH—Maybe we should use \$1,000,000 now just as a place holder.

LD and JS leave the meeting.

Discussion with AC (?) about this list and whether the organizations on it have looked for other sources of funding before coming to the county. Also discussion ARPA funds requirements.

Dennis Rabidou, Juvenile Courts, discusses an upcoming meeting with the Commissioners, but it’s difficult to hear.

AH leaves to talk to Tanya about the data the commissioners need to make a decision on salaries.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

02:38:40—AH returns. Tanya and Shelly are working on it, but they're not done yet. Reason for this talk is for the Deputy Clerk of the Board. Should we address that now and wait until tomorrow for the other salaries? Today is the Deputy Clerk's last day here. We need a resolution to approve the rates but I want to make sure all the ducks are in a row before we approve something. Want to make sure we've got parity.

Commissioners decide to reconvene at 3:00 PM when they'll have the numbers they need to make their decisions.

AH—Also, we should schedule some time to deal with your ARPA funding spread sheet. Let's put it on the agenda for at least an hour next Monday afternoon.

CB—When ARPA gets on the agenda, everybody shows up.

AH—The way I see it, we don't collect enough money to pay for the wage increases for the hyper-inflation we've been seeing.

CB—They're Covid related.

02:53:00—Resolution concerning administrative leave.

CB—Move to approve Resolution 23-2022, outlining admin leave policy with regards to Covid. Passes 3-0.

AH—We also need to address the Tunk Valley. I like to get stuff done. How do we keep things from escalating.

CB—I've been writing stuff down all along and I put them out there, when you're ready.

AH—We need to be responsive to people. Remember when the 1 acre zoning down there (lower Methow?) was ridiculous? We finally changed it and nobody even made a comment.

AH—Also want to move forward with water storage projects, too, but it's hard because of money.

Adjourn until 3:00 PM

03:00:30—AH has distributed copies of a document.

AH—It's 3 o'clock. Salaries. I worked with Tanya to double-check the numbers. Look at the sheet that says COB, DC Admin, Chief Civil, Salary Comparisons. Our wages are at 85% of the averages. 85% has been our target. Our county income isn't 100% of that of the counties we used in comparison. I looked at Deputy Clerk of the Board, and that position is probably a little low-paid. I propose to change her from Grade 18 to Grade 24. \$3,100 to \$3,600 per month plus give another 2% to all non-bargaining employees. We've already done 2% this year, and this would be another 2% for all non-bargaining.

JD—Can we make it work?

AH—Budget-wise, yes, at least for this year. Subsequent years we'll have to budget. Eventually, wages will outstrip our revenue.

JD—We'll have to bite the bullet.

AH—Only way we can increase revenue is if sales tax keeps going up because people purchase more stuff and if we can get unfunded mandates to go away

JD—If we can get compensation for indigent defense, that'd be huge.

AH—I tried to be as fair as possible and follow the same general principles. Discussion?

AH—Keeps the Deputy Clerk of the Board in line with other jobs in the county.

JD—Is it enough to get the current clerk to reconsider?

AH—Don't know, but we have to do it. Ripple effect.

JD—Well, we can only do what we can do. We're making a good faith effort.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

CB—Ripple effect. Our performance is dependent on the people who work for us. It's an employees market. It's easy to quit and it's easy not to get good applicants. Also, I know there may be budget years in the future that don't serve us.

AH—Douglas County with its 200,000 sq/ft packing sheds. There're great for revenue.

AH—Chelan County, two years ago, had an \$8,000,000 reserve.

JD—We don't have the tree fruit industry like they have.

JD—Go ahead and say it.

AH—Not whining, but negotiating the contracts is the hardest. Trying to be very consistent. Should we be 100% of average? Yes, but can we? It's hundreds of thousands more per year. So I tried to stay consistent with the 2%. If we want to try to get to 90%, that's a policy issue and the number I'd try to hit in contract negotiations.

JD—With Rocky, we were paying him \$200,000--\$250,000 per year. He did the contract negotiations and now you do it. And with you doing it, nobody's ever complained to me. They all say you're steady, steady, steady.

AH—We've raised wages ~2% every year except for non-bargaining.

JD—Commissioner Branch, you haven't said a lot.

CB—I understand what you're looking at. You're very conscientious about wages and salaries. I appreciate your work.

CB—Chief Deputy Treasurer gets paid \$4,658 & Deputy Assessor. These folks may have to step into elected officials jobs. I was thinking that the clerks in this county, it's a tough position and it gets our work done. Direct comparison to Chief Deputies, I don't think it's an across the board comparison. And there have been only three clerks since 1980.

CB—If we want to go to 2% and let it ride....

AH—This is difficult and there are other aspects that could come into play. If we diverge, we should diverge across the board. It's consistent. I don't want to just raise one person's salary.....

JD—That's what got us into trouble before. It all gets out of whack.

AH—And you get people working out of class.

JD—The policy we adopted in being consistent, that's the best way to go. Otherwise you're pitting one department against another and it's hard to fix. I've got lots of positive feed-back about what we did for Public Works.

AH—We're not trying to make money. We're trying to conserve the money we have because we can't price our widgets higher. So here's the proposal: We do this 2% change, and I'll get into the difference between us and other counties with a professional salary survey. Or maybe do it in-house.

CB—I guess the union people are the last to be dealt with.

JD—I don't have much faith in those surveys.

AH—It'll take a long time to do it.

JD—I've got to hand it to these girls. They dig this information up in such a short time and it's got to be frustrating to them, but they just smile and take it.

AH—And I appreciate the Clerk of the Board doing this for me.

CB—Maybe salary surveys should be tied more to the county's income, too.

AH—I did that with Sheriff's Deputies. You have to compare budget to budget. Ex: Take Douglas County. we get PILT (Payment in lieu of taxes) money and that don't.

CB—If we look at who's most likely to steal our employees...

AH—Then you have to look at Douglas and Chelan, but their budgets are so much bigger than ours.

CB—Well. Like I said before. Let's go with what you've proposed and let it ride. Meaning if we lose employees, we lose employees.

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, February 7, 2022 AM and PM

AH—If we consistently lose employees based on wages, we have to do a complete overhaul of our policies.

CB—And our structures, as well. Look at the organizational chart.

AH—If you're paying the market rate and you can't sustain that, you have to cut employees. We're not a county that can cut many employees.

AH—We'd have to say to departments—Here's your budget. And if they have to cut people, they cut them.

CB—And people want more services. And what do we spend the money on? I'm not saying we're spending it on what we don't need, but we need to look at it.

AH—Trying to keep the Sheriff's fleet going. \$250,000/year. That's two of three employees. If we do what I proposed, it's consistent with everybody. If we want to change the percentages, we have to talk about it.

CB—With union negotiation, you can tell the non-union people that you gave all the money to the unions.

AH—Yes. Non-bargaining people's voices never get heard.

AH—We have nine different contracts, and we try to tie them together. If one's goes up, they all go up. Long discussion about CB's experience as trucker and mechanic and private sector vs government jobs.

CB—So I say again, let's go with your proposal and let it ride. If employees don't want to work for that, or just want a different job for whatever reason, we've got to let them go.

AH—Yes. And I'll also say that there are few jobs that pay 17% into your retirement package and full blown insurance.

CB—There's a few jobs like that.

AH—Is this the path we want to pursue?

CB—It's the path we have to pursue. And I think these are pretty lean budgets. And when it comes to salaries, maybe we should be concerned about other things.

AH—Here's how I've looked at it for the last five years. If we use only the money that's an increase in our tax collection for labor, and we get other money—sales tax, PILT, etc., we can have money to do other things—scan all of our records, fix the court house. There are maintenance things we have to do. They need to be done. Don't think of it very much but it's expensive. Look at the air-conditioners. Or if the commissioners 20 years ago had water-proofed the copings, maybe we wouldn't have the expense now. But if you don't have any money and are trying to pay people...

CB—Based on the numbers, I have to go along.

JD—I agree.

CB—Salary survey has value, the ability to pay has more value. But it takes time. If I spend my time trying to fix problems like indigent funding and we aren't filing lawsuits against the state, that saves money, too. Looking for efficiency and looking for economic development opportunity.

AH—Houses don't add much revenue. Industry does but that's hard to do. Facilitate infrastructure to allow cities to expand.

CB—Cities aren't doing infill well.

AH—So do we want the HR Director draw up a resolution to reclassify the Deputy Clerk of the Board to Step 24, and also a resolution for a 2% wage increase for non-bargaining employees?

JD—Yes. So moved.

Passes 3-0.

AH—Adjourn until tomorrow.

JD—I'll go thank those girls for their hard work.