

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners  
Monday, March 21, 2022 AM

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  
DH—Dan Higbee, Building Department  
TE—Tanya Everett, Human Resources  
NP—Naomi Peasley, Fairgrounds Manager

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The time stamps refer to the times on the AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date at [https://www.okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live\\_streaming\\_of\\_meetings.php](https://www.okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php). To locate items in real time, the clock on the wall in the AV Capture screen can be helpful.

Summary of significant discussions:

- *Commissioners discuss again how to prioritize ARPA spending and also, how to justify it. They also discuss the new communications system the county may switch will work well in Okanogan County and how Fire Districts will pay for the new radios they'll need.*
- *Naomi Peasley gives her monthly report to the Commissioners and then discusses how she feels like she's being hammered by the community, the Fair Advisory Committee (FAC) and the BOCC. A long discussion follows with commissioners pointing out the support they feel they've given her and how they're trying to repair the bad feelings between her and the FAC. Several members of the audience make statements in support of NP. The commissioners decide it would be a good idea for the BOCC to hold a joint meeting with the FAC.*

**0:00:00**—Commissioners discuss changes to the day's agenda. They invite Rocky and Pete (Planning Department) and Ester Milner (Chief Civil Deputy in the Prosecutor's Office) to an executive session later in the day to discuss potential litigation. AH notes that there will also be an executive session to discuss the performance of a public employee at 2:00 PM.

AH also wants to discuss the ARPA funds. Fire District 6 is in a bad way due to delays in construction which have raised the cost of the new Fire Station. He and CB talk about how to the justifications for the projects they propose for the \$8,000,000 ARPA money. Counties receiving less than \$10,000,000 can use the money to fund government services.

**00:08:18**—AH—asks CB what it will take to get the BOCC to get to the point where they know how they will spend the ARPA money.

CB—Make a list and talk about each one.

AH—Two paths we can use.

- Follow the ARPA guidelines under each heading

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- Say its our standard loss and use it for government services (an option available to counties receiving less than \$10,000,000).

CB—We'll still need to talk about each one. For example, Omak's \$10,000,000 infrastructure project. They'll need some of this money. Another is the PUD. \$2,000,000 for broadband. The funding will be conditional on getting another grant. We can infill with other projects if they don't get the grant.

AH—Prioritize shovel ready projects? We can use them to infill the list to replace projects that couldn't find other sources of money.

JD—The PUD money is for broadband?

AH—Yes. But that won't cover any of the broadband projects without the match.

Discussion of Mike Worden's communications project.

JD—All the fire chiefs are worried about the change in communications which would require a change in radios. Expensive. And Jack (?) says the DOT's radios work poorly in Okanogan County because of its topography.

Discussion about getting all the experts together to discuss the proposed change in the communications system—how much money the change would cost, how well the DOT system works in Okanogan County, etc.

**00:26:40**—Executive Session to discuss Potential litigation. RCW42:30.110h(i). Rocky Robbins and Pete Palmer of the Planning Department and Ester Milner, Civil Chief Deputy Prosecutor will attend. 30 minutes.

**01:18:25**—Dan Higbee, Building Department needs to hire a new person to replace one who is leaving. DH, the BOCC and TE discuss how to hire and fund the new position.

**01:24:30**—AH—We need to have another executive session. I just noticed a bunch of emails.

CB—I'll have something to say about them. I think the law says we can hear complaints and the response about a public employee in public and then go to executive session to discuss it.

AH—Can you check on that? I'm all for it.

CB—Maybe we can head off some of the craziness that can occur.

**01:27:17**—AH—I need to discuss something for ARPA funding for Salmon Recovery to make sure you guys are up to speed on it, and you're OK with me going in this direction. The Salmon Creek Irrigation District has a surface diversion. The Bureau of Reclamation needs to recognize that some money out of the huge infrastructure bill can be spent on the surface diversion at intake to keep lampreys and steelhead out of it. I want to use Bureau of Reclamation money to pay to fix it. Brad (?) knows it needs to be done.

CB—The Salmon Recovery Board agrees it needs to be done?

AH—Yes. Irrigators are important.

CB—If you're representing the county and you all agree, I approve.

**01:35:30**—AH—I forgot to tell everybody that we got an AA- rating affirmed, and all the bonds were sold. We'll get the proceeds on April 7. Use it for the Forest Service building remodel, the two Public Works buildings and the Sheriff's storage building and the morgue. Start the ball rolling to get contracts going. We need to spend 85% of the money in three years. Shouldn't be hard.

CB—I think we're on track.

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**01:37:50**—AH—asks CB what they have to do to get to the point of deciding whether to use the ARPA money under the allowable loss.

CB—We need to have time to discuss and go through the priorities.

AH—Will it matter about priorities if we use the \$10,000,000 loss? What would you use if you think we can't put it all in loss?

CB—We're getting to the point where we can put it all in loss, but we need to grab the other justifications, too.

AH—I totally agree. Some aren't loss. Fire District 6, there's no rational. It's a government service, though.

CB—I need to explore it. What's the shortfall?

AH--\$300,000.

CB—Alan Fanestock proposed we fund the pump in full and he puts what he's raised into the fire hall, but that won't be enough.

AH—They did a levy lid lift. 17.5¢ extra. Guess they went with what they got for a bond, but with the delay—6 months—the price of materials spiked. The contractor can legally renegotiate because of the delay between accepting the bid and getting the permit.

AH—We need to schedule some time for this. Maybe Wednesday afternoon.

**01:47:00**—Bid Opening. Legal Newspaper Bids

BOCC received two bids. AH reads them. Methow Valley News and Okanogan Gazette. LJ will do an analysis similar to what she did last year of the different aspects of the bid, including font size. The commissioners will award the bid on Tuesday, March 22 in the afternoon.

**02:16:40**—Update Fairgrounds, Naomi Peasley

AH—We read the emails and you asked that this be priority.

AH—We take money from the public and provide services to the public. The Fair Advisory Committee (FAC)—unpaid—provides a service by working to put on the fair. I'm hoping we can all move in the direction of the Fair being something we're doing for the community. If there's strife on the committee, we need to move beyond it.

NP—But I was just going to do my regular update. The complaint issue is tomorrow.

NP—My update: I asked three suppliers for bids on the race horse barn using trust fund money. The New Civil Prosecutor is working on an agreement with the Colvilles to build it if we provide the materials. Here are the bids and my recommendation.

AH—Make sure it's all done properly. What does the tribe get for the labor?

NP—Use the facilities for three years consecutively for free.

AH—Allow for any tribal member to use the grounds for free, but not rental?

NP—The north end only.

AH—Sponsored events or personal use?

NP—Personal use but two paid events for free for three consecutive years. Lawyers are working on the details. We want to buy because of building with steel costs so much now. (She distributes bids to the commissioners.) Cutter Rains (new member of the FAC) has reviewed and approved and wants to move forward with it, but worried about costs. A couple of tribal members have asked why the agreement is taking so long. Because of the turnover in the Prosecutor's Office. The lowest bid is \$97,370, not including tax and shipping.

AH—Please double-check with Western Ranch in Wenatchee. What's the time frame?

NP—The tribe is waiting on us for the agreement.

AH—Check on tax and shipping for these bids. How much is in the trust fund?

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NP—\$108,000. If it's over 180 Boots and Saddles will help with costs, or take it out of our budget.

AH—Please ask how much Boots and Saddles will pay.

NP—Also, there's bids for starting gates and bids for electrical work.

NP—I'd like to get a Veterans and Senior Citizens discount for the fair this year. Would you approve?

AH—It's a great idea but how to administer it? Talk to the Auditor.

NP—I've talk to Cari (Hall, County Auditor) and Pam already.

CB—Two things AH brought up. Verify the budget implications for the building. I want to add, if we order the building based on the agreement being approved, we need a Plan B.

AH—Who would do the building? If anyone else would build it, we can't get out of bidding rules. Plan B is we need to bid for construction. If it's less than \$300,000, there's no need for bids. I don't think steel will continue to rise and I don't want to accept a bid with the agreement. Who will build it for the tribe?

NP—Don't want to use a name.

AH—They're ready to do that with an agreement? Concrete and piers will cost money, too.

NP—Sorry to present this without all the ducks in a row.

AH—It's OK.

NP—Ground prep, piers, concrete will all be in the agreement.

NP—Other projects at the Fair Grounds—Trees were taken out.

NP—The first month of the requested two years of a public records request was completed. It was three days.

Some discussion of where the person will review the records and what the Civil Deputy will say.

**2:37:45**—NP—I am the county department head you hired to do the job. My emotions and passions are clear. I'm working on holding it back. I represent the Fair and I'm liable for what goes wrong. Me, as Fair Manager.

AH—You're not personally liable for what goes wrong. That's on us, not you. That's why we have to do proper procurement procedures.

NP—Here's why the job is a revolving door. I'll draw a picture. (*Viewers on AV Capture unable to see the drawing.*) I'm the fair office. The community doesn't know that I'm not part of the fair. I get yelled at. I get complaints all from this big pounding machine called the community. They don't go to the FAC or the BOCC. They come to me. That's what you hired me to do—to facilitate problems before they come to you or to the FAC. I'm that person.

NP—Here's the FAC. Where's the security? Why isn't the barn fixed? Why isn't this or that done? I get that all from them.

NP—Here's the BOCC who I'm supposed to be representing. Follow these rules and procedures, be professional. I'm getting beat down from everywhere. This is why the person isn't staying in the position. Because this person is getting no support and being constantly hammered on by these people. (*NP returns from drawing.*) This is why I'm frustrated and begging for your support and help to follow these ..... I absolutely agree that there are people not playing well together in the sandbox right now. Personality issues. I continue to get hammered on by everybody. I'd like your support in upholding county policy and rules.

AH—I'm curious. What's your definition of the BOCC hammering on you? Because as far as I can tell, over there at the Fair Grounds, we've put in more money, more time, more effort into the Fair Grounds in the last five years than in a long time.

NP—In the last five years? That's because I've stirred the pot.

AH—Prior to you, we applied for a grant. What support do you want?

NP—You're asking me to uphold the job description but not attend the meetings. Asking me to....

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AH—Let's address that. Personality problems and we asked you not to attend this last meeting and CB would attend it. We were hoping to get this straightened out. I brought up the other day having one of the commissioners as an ex-officio member so the FAC members didn't have to know Robert's Rules.

NP—Structure was your solution. Absolutely agree with it.

AH—Good. Next point.

CB—But about structure. I want to make sure the structure isn't being used against us.

NP—Make sure it's being perceived correctly.

CB—Yes.

NP—Next. Asking me to ignore issues and do my job while being blatantly being disrespected.

AH—Ignore issues?

NP—Sit in the back of the room at meetings and don't speak unless called upon.

AH—That's at FAC meetings. They try to put on the Fair. They should say—Naomi, we want to do X. What would it take from you to get it done? Then you tell them. And if it doesn't get done, well, you gave them the information.

CB—I agree with how AH is proceeding, but emotions are building. My point is that any conversation here not be accusations. If you feel comfortable and right, probably be calmer about it.

NP—I think I'm right for the last two years.

CB—But I see emotions escalating and I don't want it to get out of hand.

AH—I agree. This was because somebody...

NP—Somebody's asked to be held accountable and be transparent.

AH—And you want us to support you more.

NP—You said I'm the employee and you're my boss.

AH—Yes. You're directly under us, like Tanya Everett, Dan Higbee, etc.

NP—This is just the Fair and you guys have big issues.

AH—This is a big issue. (Looks at the people in the audience) Someone has raised a hand. If I allow the public to speak, it should be a helpful comment.

Wanda—I'm Wanda (*can't hear the surname.*) I'm the Fair (*something?*) I have repeated heard Naomi. She sends out timely reminders at the FAC meetings. These things need to be done. Naomi's been throwing them out but the FAC isn't acting.

AH—I know she has timelines, but she's not directing the FAC. Her job is to help facilitate that the best way she can. That's about structure.

NP—This is not going well. It's broken.

AH—What's broken?

NP—My position. It's a revolving door for how many years?

AH—It's not just the job. It's about who we hire. Maybe other people didn't have the passion after being hired.

CB—I have two comments:

- The nature of the beast is we're elected, and new people are elected over the years. But we've made quite a bit of effort to support you.
- What bothers me about this conversation is—we have an employee in the roll of judge right now and there's something about this that bothers me about how to proceed. Other employees are targets, too. Planning for example. The time NP's been Fair Coordinator...

NP—I'm not Fair Coordinator.

CB—It's not the time for you to correct me. I'm one of your supervisors and this is starting to get to the point where the BOCC is on trial over how well we're doing our job. Can we look at the salaries we've provided?

AH—They've gone up immensely because it had to. From \$37,000 to \$52,000.

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CB—The conflict with maintenance. We took it away from the Fair Grounds and gave it to Maintenance. We've had conflict where AH was targeted, so I'm doing that. Here's a list of our support. Hire someone with big expectations, they're to do with what's provided to them and don't put us on trial in public. I think that's an incredible problem. It makes the job more difficult if the FAC and public turn against us.

AH—That's the name of the job and we've got other situations going on.

CB—We actually have immense stress, too.

AH—So we had complaints and addressed both of them. NP asked to be able to respond in public. She wants more support from us. I think I have a fair idea what the support she wants looks like. Maybe it would help is some from the Board is running the meetings.

JD—I agree.

CB—We decided NP not attend the last meeting so I could talk to the FAC unencumbered by personalities. My perspective is that it was to help NP. I think it helped the FAC, but we'd have to ask them that. I thought we moved forward.

AH—If you can't go to the meeting, I can help.

CB—If we establish a rationale for what we do, it can continue if we're not in office. Sometimes I have reservations what to tell the FAC...

AH—They don't realize the budget isn't set in stone. If they need more money, they should ask.

CB—And there's money set aside for problems. We have changed NP's budget. We've had issues on the Planning Commission, etc.

AH—It's 12:15. I appreciate your addressing your need of help from us. Like I say, this needs to stop.

NP—I agree. Like Maurice Goodall said, clear lines need to be drawn between the FAC and myself. It's always been blurred.

AH—First, I'm not sure why Maurice is getting into the middle of that and why he made the statement. The lines are blurred because the Fair happens over there. I don't say—do this, don't do that.

NP—Others have said it.

AH—There's give and take. The only thing you can do is your best. Give the FAC your timeline. If it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. Anything else?

NP—One. When I say I need support, you advise me as my boss. And you advise and oversee the FAC. We sit on common ground. I don't oversee the FAC. I wasn't aiming to put you on trial. I'm trying to point things out. I've been told I'm self-righteous but I'm trying to fix things and make them better.

CB—Nobody here said anything about self-righteous or any other accusations, but one thing I want to say—I don't want to hear anyone else thrown under the bus. There was a reference to Maurice Goodall, who used to run the Fair Grounds and knows stuff about it. And you say—Don't know why he has to get involved. I've often times heard you say he helped.

NP—He was my close advisor until recently.

CB—Because of his knowledge of the Fair Grounds facility. I don't want any more people under the bus. Don't want a blame game. Better to say—We're the supervisors of the FAC, etc. and we're giving them the tools they need without us micromanaging the situation. That's not happening right now. I'm typically a very optimistic person, but this case has tired my optimism. It'll take everyone. If it can't occur without conflict, there are people in the county who know and work really hard to keep harmony. I cannot buy into a lot of blame. Sometimes you have to go deeper. Finding the solution instead of putting people on trial is really important.

AH—Yeah.

CB—So, if somebody asks you for information, why not just give it to them? I think you know the intent is to make it happen in a harmonious way. You throw it back over to us and say you're not supported us and not talking to all those people. I'm sure there are others who say you haven't dealt with Naomi. So here we are.

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AH—All I can say is we have jobs to do and rule to abide by. If we represent county government, we need to be professional so we don't erode that trust. I understand your arguments and we'll consider them and consider the FAC. I hope we can all get along.

Speaker from the audience—I'm the barn supervisor for Home Economics. What I see happening to Naomi is if I go to the office, she's got a pile of work and there's nobody to buffer what comes through the door. She's got to stop everything and give a ticket, etc. She needs a buffer. Maybe a volunteer who says—she's busy now. Can I take the information and get back to you? That'd be a big help and lower stress.

AH—I thought you were going to have somebody working in May?

NP—Shelly's waiting on a resolution from the BOCC.

AH—We'll check into that.

Another speaker from the audience—I'm an FAC member and the majority of the FAC is happy with Naomi.

AH—I appreciate that. The only reason we decided NP shouldn't attend was to get stuff sorted out as to what was going on.

CB—What happened at the meeting was the FAC has the tools to run the show and if they don't like what's going on, they've got tools for that, too. If they don't like the chair, the FAC gives the chair the authority to do stuff, not the BOCC. To make sure the FAC understands. The intent of NP not being at the meeting was not to complicate matters. Just let it happen.

CB—I think there's a real effort to do that. I also think that there are some issues between the chair and NP that are troubling to me.

Speaker in the audience—And we have new blood on the FAC and maybe that will make a difference.

AH—Maybe on a FAC meeting night, it should be a joint meeting with the BOCC.

CB—We could do that with the Planning Commission, too.

Adjourn until 1:30