

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, January 17th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Jon Neal (JN), BOCC District 3
Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Naomi Peasley (NP), Fairgrounds Director
Daniel Higbee (DH), Building Department
Larry Hudson (LH), Noxious Weeds Office
Esther Milner (EM), Prosecutor's Office
Dennis Rabidou (DR), Chair, OBHC (Okanogan Behavioral Health Care)
Dave McClay (DM), CEO, OBHC
Paul Budrow (PB), Sheriff
Larry Gilman (LG), Assessor

Time stamps refer to the time on the wall clock. An AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date is available at: https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php

Summary of Important Discussions:

- *Mazama Advisory Committee applying for trail-building grant to separate pedestrian and road traffic*
- *Fairgrounds to have new floors in Agriplex Annex, new bathroom partitions*
- *Building numbers up, revenues slightly down, new trainee sought for March, Senior Plans Examiner to retire next year.*
- *Noxious Weeds Board to consider removing Scotch Thistle from list as solution to lack of commercial applicators available; spring training to be held at Omak Theater, Town Hall meetings with landowners starting in February.*
- *Behavioral Health, Prosecutor's office and Sheriff debate next step to take toward signing agreement to distribute Opioid settlement funds; county representative(s) to participate in regional council; \$48,000 available annually for 15 years to aid Okanogan County treatment programs*
- *Assessor's office updated its vehicle fleet with 2021, 2022 model trucks; is ordering new one for 2023.*

1:30- **AH:** Last summer I talked with Jim Gregg, part of the Mazama Advisory Committee, about paths or trails from the Mazama gas station down to the old fire hall. They want to get paths established that are off the road. There's a \$3,000 grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Washington. He asked if the county would be the fiscal sponsor. We can write a letter saying yes, we'll do that. **JN:** As long as Lanie agrees. **AH:** She takes care of some big ones, like homeless grants. Sooner than later we have to talk about someone negotiating contracts, maybe having a commissioner doing that. There are pros and cons. You can sign off on things. But you're caught between keeping your employees and being fiscally responsible. ...**JN:** Who or what does our grant writing? **AH:** No one. **JN:** A good grant writer can pay for themselves. **AH:** It's

been talked about but it's never come to fruition. **JN:** It would be interesting to see a job description. **AH:** I don't think they run off current expenses--they run off grants. **LJ:** The Dept. of Commerce only allows about \$3,500 for county administration because it's a "pass through" grant. We currently have two of those. **JN:** Actually, we have more than that, you only manage two of them. **LJ:** Correct. **AH:** Jim's going to send a template over (for the trails grant letter).

1:39 - *JN asks about the trailhead on county land being turned over to the city of Oroville, a right of way issue.* **AH:** The Trails Association had agreed with the transfer the RCO (Recreation and Conservation Office) did. They'll be fine with it.

1:30 - **AH:** Naomi Peasley (Fairgrounds Director) came in. She said the floor covering for the Annex Agriplex came to \$380 more than what they (thought). Then we got a grant from the LTAC (Lodging Tax Advisory Committee) to redo the bathrooms, the partitions. She wanted to know if she can run (the budget) negative, and that's okay. Just wanted to make sure you're good with that. **JN:** Are any bathrooms handicapped compliant? **AH:** Not quite sure. We're going to upgrade them as best we can.

2:01 - Building Director's report - **DH:** In 2022 we had close to 200 applications that were all part of that cannabis thing. Mostly greenhouses and containers. **AH:** Those were coming into compliance. They were already there. **DH:** That's right. **AH:** So is that why the north and central permits are so high? **DH:** Yes. There are a few cannabis operations in the Methow but for the most part they were in compliance. So our number of applications was quite a bit more than the last few years. Interestingly, though, our revenue was a bit down from last year. ...I'm guessing we just had bigger projects in 2021 than in 2022. ...Our fee schedule is right in there. ...Does Jon (*Neal*) know we're not a current expense, we have our own fund? **AH:** four years ago the auditor said, "Where's all the money from the Building Department going? We said, "We've got it." She explained that building permit money is very specific to the Building Department. **DH:** So far, the fees are working. ...I have not advertised for a trainee yet, we'll be doing that soon. That is already in the budget. Larry Surface (Senior Plans Examiner) is going to retire in March 2024 so we have a year to train. It's difficult to find someone with experience and certifications to come in here. ...I need a year to train so they can get the certifications before Larry retires. We do contracts with a few towns: Twisp, Brewster, Riverside and Conconully, so we actually issue their permits and take the money but with the other towns we just bill them per (*inaudible*). They issue their own permits. The plan right now is for Larry, after retiring, to pick up Brewster and Twisp, which will help us. He'll be their building official. **AH:** Why? **DH:** It's part-time. Right now it doesn't take a lot of time. But in Twisp there's a lot of things happening in the next few years (*annexing the Palms, above the old school, Hank's employee housing*). Other than that our red truck is on the surplus list. Naomi (*Peasley*) is going to look at it. *AH explains how the transfer would work.*

2:12 - **DH:** I was surprised by the numbers they showed me for the north end. A lot of that is the cannabis. The north end stays really busy. **AH:** (*reading*) 20 or so manufactured homes. Single family (*inaudible*) issued was 40. That's almost as much as the Methow. Methow only 67. **DH:** There were issues in the numbers. When people would withdraw permits. Somebody would apply in 2022 and because of whatever reason they would withdraw that in 2023. Debbie isn't going back and changing the 2022 numbers.

2:21 - Approval of Resolution 13-2023 providing for a live scan finger and palm print purchase for the Sheriff's Department.

2:27 - Noxious Weeds report - *LH arrives, introduces himself to Commissioner Neal, passes out calendars.* **LH:** We're partners with two Canadian invasive species societies as well as Ferry County, and we do projects across jurisdictional boundaries. In October we were discussing the

lien on Thurlow's property. I wanted to see if there's any progress. AH: I called them and talked with them. ...But now I've got to get a lien set up. I'll call and see if we can set up a date. On March 2nd we'll be setting up our spring certification class at the Omak Theater. Basically the same kind of deal as in December. AH: Is that bookwork or just class work? LH: People giving talks. They get their credit for attending. All Power Point talks. Been pretty well received since we started that. At the December class there were 70 people attending. We're expecting about the same. In October we discussed issues with sub-contractors on the reservation. Because of that we are working on a new contract with the tribe. The Weed Office will still do the inspecting, talking to landowners, but the actual contractor spraying will be handled by the tribe. AH: That'll take a load off your group. LH: We show the applicators where the priority weed sites are, then follow up to see that the weeds are dying.

Another thing we discussed: We're looking at incorporating some changes to the Weed Office this year. That's due to a shortage of commercial applicators to sub-contract with. We have one available full time, one available on weekends. We've gone from six applicators to two. Going to have to figure something out. We came up with, first option, decrease the number of species requiring control in the county. AH: who has that authority? LH: The Weed Board will discuss that at our January meeting. If they want to do that we must submit a request to the state, so it wouldn't be for this year. AH: You said 70 people go to (*the training*) but there are only two in the county that will work on grant-written stuff? LH: One of them, the board doesn't want to work with. Another decided he was done with spraying. Loomis Ag Service has been doing work for the weed service over 20 years now. He'll keep doing the work, and the one in Tunk Valley for the weekends. The one applicator we had issues with is buying up a lot of commercial businesses. There are not many out there. AH: Why would the Weed Office be in the business of hiring contractors to do it? LH: All of our grant work— AH: Because those are on public lands. LH: Not all, there's wildfire recovery work. Other situations where we also need those applicators are for enforcement work. AH: Is the grant money solely for those applicators or are there some administrative costs we get? LH: For the most part it's just for the applicators. The ones we have are enough for the grant work. The issue is for all these private landowners that we're required to control for weeds. A lot of elderly folk who can't do the work themselves, they don't have people available to hire. There are about 200,000 acres known to be infested with mandatory weeds.

AH: What weeds would you take off the list? LH: Musk Thistle, Scotch Thistle, Hoary Alyssum, Rush Skeleton weed. Another thought: instead of fully eliminating them from mandatory control list, I would break the county up based on the distribution of these weeds. So Musk Thistle is present on just about every property in the Northeast of the county. So if we said it's not mandatory control here but it would be everywhere else, that would take a lot of work off the applicators. It's not a good fix either way.

AH: If it were me I would not do it piece by piece because we're collecting from everybody's parcels to do some work and to eliminate somebody from having to do work, I don't think it's fair. I get it. Not good choices either way but... LH: Another option, which would involve the commissioners in the discussion, would be to purchase the equipment and have an applicator in the office to handle enforcement work, like Ferry County does. It would have to be a pretty good wage for someone to be billing to do that, and a big investment up front, but if we charged as much as the commercial applicators to do that, money would get recuperated into the budget. AH: Those all don't sound like very good options. LH: Or keep it as we are. We know we don't have enough (applicators) to get it all done, but prioritize as we go and hopefully we'll get some more applicators. AH: Honestly, I think that's the only thing you're going to be able to do. That, unless there's some weeds on the list that really shouldn't be mandatory. LH: By the State definition, it says that all known populations of that specific weed in the county can be controlled prior to seed production. Those four species I named, even if we had ten applicators, we couldn't do it. We haven't adjusted that because Musk Thistle and Scotch Thistle were priorities for 30 to 40 years. You hate to lose that ground. But-- AH: Is Scotch the small— LH: It's the massive ten foot-tall

stuff. ...The greyish silver stalks. Monstrous things. **AH:** I would say you just prioritize and get it done that way. **LH:** The flip side of that is, we say we've got to do enforcement on the neighbor and it's going to blow back on to them. **AH:** Well, maybe it is an idea to try and ask for removal of (Scotch Thistle). **LH:** It's ultimately going to come down to the board's decision. I've been racking my brain for the last couple of months trying to figure it out. **AH:** I do not like the idea of in-house spraying. **LH:** The board doesn't either. It does open us up for liability. **AH:** And competing against private enterprise. Even if there isn't any, it's still a perception. I don't want big government, that's for sure.

2:45 - **LH:** Along with that, we're looking at getting those town hall meetings to get the opinion of the people. ...We'll be looking at options to address the problem and get any ideas of programs, things they would like to see from the Weed Office. Maybe for the beginning of February, probably eight different meetings across the county as well as a zoom meeting.

LH: The last thing is an update on the aquatics program, that quarter mile buffer with Canada on Lake Osoyoos. We're good to go for treatment up there. **AH:** 2024 is the last year for that. Is there any way to get some sort of report showing progress on what we're doing? **LH:** Last year I put out a newsletter to the lake association, what's been done, plans, so it would be pretty easy to put one out this year. **JN:** Is Canada still herbiciding, or harvesting? **LH:** Still harvesting, at this point herbicide not approved. Procella is in the process. Talking with Aqua Technics, he thinks it will get final approval in April. **JN:** Harvesting just cuts the milfoil up and it drifts. **LH:** ...It's basically their only option now is keeping swimmers from getting tangled up in it... **LH:** When they're harvesting you can actually see the flow if it. So aside from the Lake Management District, Spectacle Lake is looking at doing another treatment. I'm pretty sure Patterson will want to do some this year. I've put in a request with the DNR to get herbicide. They're pretty good about giving \$5,000-\$10,000 worth; it cuts some of the cost for land owners. I've also put in for some grant funding for the U.S. Bureau of Recreation that would cover surveying on Spectacle Lake, Conconully Lake and Conconully reservoir, as well as another project on Rufus Woods and Lake Pateros for aquatic surveying. *AH suggests getting money from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. LH will definitely contact them.*

3:00 - Discussion, Opioid Abatement - **AH:** We asked for this meeting because we're going to be getting \$48,000 a year for opioid response. Chelan County is putting together this thing that they want us to sign: BHASO. **EM:** That's Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization. It's an existing organization that they're suggesting we use for Okanogan's abatement council. **AH:** All we want them to do is administrate funds for the 10% fee and then we would spend the money. **EM:** Kevin McCray (*Grant County*) just submitted an amendment to it. **AH:** What would OBHC spend that money on? **DM:** We already have some opioid money coming in that we're using on out-patient treatment, to pay for places of treatment, for substitutes. **AH:** In the jail is money being able to be used, for Narcan, maybe? **PB:** Definitely we can always use it for that. Sort of a misunderstanding. (*He was not up to date on the abatement.*) I'm catching up. **AH:** I still think we need Beacon (*Beacon Health Options serves as the region's BHASO*) to oversee that because it was part of the legal settlement to create these oversight committees. (*AH leaves to go to another meeting.*)

EM: I would like to know a little more about them (*BHASO*). ...I was not able to find the inter-local agreement. They're required to have representatives from each participating local government and they need to have experience in this area. I guess for me to recommend that we sign this agreement I would like to know more about how the entity is configured. ...I'm not sure where we could get more information.

DR: If that's the entity they're suggesting, that's really supposed to address the allocation, managing and distribution of the funds. **EM:** If an existing organization ticks all the boxes, that's a lot easier than setting up a new one. ... **DR:** So if Beacon is going to take that up, where is the local representation? Especially when the council has responsibility for hearing complaints about funding. For me that's taking a lot from local jurisdictions. **EM:** I thought that this was a division of WA State Health Care Authority. That's where I found their web page. Kevin Overbay from Chelan forwarded it. ...I'm not sure who put this agreement together. It was sent out to commissioners asking them to get their council on board. So Kevin McCray from Grant County, the one who did the amendment, wanted to make sure that we're not agreeing to pool the money. We want the funds to come back to Okanogan County to be used here. *(She informs PB that this money comes from the settlement with the drug companies.)* **DR:** The largest entity managing the nine regions is trying to get if filtered down to the local jurisdictions. I think that the intent is to have it managed (locally). **EM:** they definitely want regional agreements... **DR:** So can we get back to Kevin and ask where is the local representation on this? **DM:** There seems to be no inter-local agreement. *EM refers to the one state memorandum:* "The opiate abatement council for each allocation region shall be composed of representation from both participating counties and towns or cities. The method for choosing members and the terms they will serve should be determined by the allocation region's participating local governments. Persons who serve... must have work or education experience pertaining to one or more of the approved uses." It's about anything you think of is going to fall in as an okay abatement use. ...**DR:** So if OBHC agrees to that establishment, then who does our county appoint? **EM:** If BHASO doesn't have that representation from Okanogan County, that isn't going to work. ...**PB:** who's the leader of this thing, statewide? **EM:** The agreement came to us from the Attorney General. They were a big part of the lawsuit, getting memos out to the regional governments. ...Commissioner Hover wanted you all at the table because you all manage departments or entities that would probably be the ones using these funds. The commissioners want some input and to get some clear direction on how we think these are going to best serve the county and make sure we don't sign anything that goes against that. *DR wonders if the council will meet with the region's counties before asking them to sign.* **JN:** I think they just threw the agreement out there to see what the response was. **EM:** I was feeling a little lost too... What this needs is a meeting.

PB: Is there a list of things you can and can't spend the money for? **EM:** *(The fund)* would support Programs in the jail... connecting people to care. **DR:** I see "planning, leadership and training". Maybe the first thing to do is have a retreat *(laughter)*. **PB:** The program in the jail now is covered by a grant. So the funds we would get would address mental health on the outside, and the Recovery Navigator Program, to get them on board, because we just approved one of their recovery coaches to enter the jail. They'll work with her *(prior to their)* release. ...**EM:** The hardest part will be fixing priorities, not figuring out how to spend the funds. We're looking at 15 years of funding.

...**DR:** Slap me if I'm wrong, but I think that that would fall into the category of what we already spend for. It would certainly help us with the SOR (State Opioid Response) program. **DM:** It's basically to serve people with opioid or stimulant addiction. There are 74 we're serving now, and 97 on the wait list. **PB:** What are the ones doing that are actually *(in the program)*? **DM:** There's a substitutes specialist, outpatient treatment; they try to connect them to other providers for other treatments, or transportation... **DR:** I think the recovery navigators sort of aren't stable yet either. Subject to short-term funding. **PB:** Are these navigators with the SOR program? **DM:** No, but they connect people to treatment. The SOR program treats them, and connects them with resources.

JN: From the commissioners' standpoint, we want to make sure we're getting the funds. We're sure we'll spend every dime. ...**PB:** My next question: It's only \$48,000 and all the cities want

some of that. **EM:** You have to be a city like Wenatchee (to claim funds). **PB:** So for us the county would administer it. **EM:** ...But we really only have OBHC as far as an entity.

3:36 - *EM will contact McCray and try to find out more about Beacon.* **EM:** Sue Hinkle, Chelan's attorney, is trying to get this thing pushed through because the funds are coming through soon. I'll get in touch with the commissioners to get a meeting together to discuss this. *(The discussion ends, Neal and Budrow share some impressions as newcomers to county government.) AH returns, asks JN about the previous discussion.* **JN:** They were going to check if the NCACH is indeed the entity which is administering the abatement, and it's relation to Beacon.

3:47 - Assessor's vehicles - **LG:** We started a year ago (ordering a vehicle) so my Equipment replacement and repair (ER&R) is based on 2022. We're short by \$948 so we'll have to do a supplement for that. The ER &R on the 2021 purchase is \$526/month. The 2023 that I just got is \$665/month. That's fuel, tires, maintenance and replacement of the next rig. ...And we *(tried to buy)* the 2021 for \$32,365 then we lost that and got an extended cab that was \$40,600. Since we got the same model, the price has gone up \$544. **AH:** If you get another truck, will that take care of your automotive needs? *LG has two older rigs, one to replace soon. It will be on the ER &R plan and he's picked it out. AH says they have extra money this year and should go ahead with it. Three of the four vehicles will then be on the ER&R plan.* **LG:** And my 2017 Dodge Journey SUV is going to the Fairgrounds because it just doesn't fit our needs. It's been in the shop. *AH says they can transfer it through current expense. He asks LJ when a surplus sale will be held. LJ says she hasn't prepared it yet. They'll surplus LG's 2006 truck. LG will take a picture of another truck he surplused two years ago and which is still "sitting there across the river because we haven't had a surplus sale since then."*

The Commissioners approve a letter confirming that Okanogan is willing to administer the grant application for the Mazama planning group to help separate pedestrian and vehicle traffic. *LJ will mail it.*

4:17 - *Meeting adjourned until Monday morning.*