

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, January 18th, 2022, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3 (via Zoom)
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Isabelle Spohn, Methow Valley resident
Larry Hudson (LH), Noxious Weeds Board Coordinator
Humphrey Woke (HW), Johnson Controls-Offerings (via Zoom)
Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Economic Alliance
Ron Gadeberg, PUD
Steve Taylor, PUD General Manager
John McDonald, Systems Engineer, PUD (via Zoom)

*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: *In public comment, difficulty accessing zoning map on Planning website; Building Dept. update - Lower Methow continues to count for most permit applications, many Brewster requests, one retirement and two to come, hopes to re-create the assistant manager position; Noxious Weeds update - Pesticide Class scheduled, Osoyoos to be treated on east and west shores except a strip below the border, \$216,000 in grants to cover weed and milfoil treatments throughout the county; presentation by a company providing organization and energy-saving services to local governments; PUD Broadband Committee shares grant-seeking woes and receives BOCC's promise of support through ARPA funds tagged for water-sewage-broadband infrastructure; master plan funding and architect's contract approved for 20-year master plan for the Public Works Building; ALPAC letter of support signed, grant to provide for maintenance of Methow Valley trails.*

1:30 - *Public Comment Period - IS is unable to find the zoning map on the Planning website and has not gotten an answer from P. Palmer addressing her inquiry. As of recently she doesn't get the Commissioners' agenda either. AH says it must be her computer; she says hers is new. JD suggests she download the search engine Firefox. AH gives her the URL of the zoning map, which works, and says she has to zoom in to get the zoning categories. He explains to CB the five steps to bring up the map on the Planning web page and CB arranges with LJ to get the URL of the zoning map put on the Commissioners web page.*

2:00 - Building Dept. Update - DH: A total of nine permit applications for January, three in the Methow, the (*ones*) affected by the moratorium. ...Last quarter not typical, no fall spike, it continued down from spring. This year the Lower Methow was the busiest area and I expect that will continue this year. Needed a budget supplemental for software and a new truck. Inspectors

were busiest by far in Twisp and Brewster. There are going to be quite a few more inspections on the Civic Center in Twisp. Randy Taylor retired and his replacement, already trained and with two certifications, has the right mentality (*for the job*). ...Larry (*Everett*) and Debi are retiring in '23. *DH says they're doing valuations as "the closest way to do a fair fee system."* *CB asks if system is outlined in the code. DH says it used to be but most towns use UBC formula with increases.* *DH: Budget this year on the rise with new laptops and tablets. AH asks if DH is using the well-tracking software "River Bank". DH has heard of it. AH explains that since now a site analysis must be done in order for a building permit to be issued, if it's determined that water is needed, "preliminary stuff" gets entered and once it's finalized, a box is checked. If site is not built on, it gets "undebited": All it is is a calculator, posted on the Cloud.*

2:25 - *AH asks LJ to change the January 3rd minutes' mention of a discussion on "conditional use permits" to "discussion of mitigation strategies for further subdivisions".*

2:30 - Noxious Weeds Update - **LH** announces Spring Pesticide License Certification Class will be held March 3rd at the Omak Theater. Gives update on Osoyoos Lake management district: Ecology doesn't want the quarter mile south of the border treated... Anna (Lyons, Weed Board Manager) tried to work with Canada. They said if we don't hear back from our email, just treat. We did in 2020 and got a letter of violation from the DOE (*but*) we worked with them last summer (*and*) they're happy with us. **CB**: Do they have a WAC for that? **LH**: I'll send you our response letter. **CB**: Do you know the Water Quality Forum in Osoyoos? **LH**: No. **CB**: It's in the planning stages. **LH**: All the west side was treated. We planned to do the east side but the plants looked pretty much like toast. Veranda Beach was the only place treated on the east side. This year we'll do the whole lake. I'll have \$216,000 worth of grants and contracts, basically money in, money out: Palmer Mt. wildfire areas, other Conservation District wildfire areas (\$50,000, with an additional \$50,000 in June), some priority DNR sites (\$5,000), Tonasket Ranger District (\$3,200), Alta and Bridgeport state parks (\$3,000), \$6,000 left on a BLM grant for leafy spurge sites on the Similkameen, and \$2,500 left from a DOE grant to treat milfoil on Alta, Patterson and Conconully Lakes and Conconully Reservoir. We'll try to get treatments done by June. I recently got certified (*for verification of*) hay fields, mulch and gravel pits so we won't have to pay the Department of Agriculture for that. *LH hopes to get their assistant manager position filled in the next two years.* (3:30) *Mentions the two truck reservoirs that vandals drilled holes in, costing \$2,000 to replace, and AH and CB say lights and cameras in the new headquarters parking lot may prevent future vandalism. There is a vacancy on the board needing to be filled by an agricultural worker in the Riverside-Conconully-Aeneas district. LH predicts local supply of herbicide will be disrupted this year. LH is glad the County Weed Management Area will meet again in March to coordinate with "state and federal folks". The group had shut down for Covid.*

2:46 - *Executive session with Tanya Everett to review performance of a public employee.*

3:14 - *LJ has scheduled a presentation by HW of services proposed by Johnson Controls-Offerings, which he says helps local governments with capital budgets, funding gaps, infrastructure, organization and challenges from climate change. HW : ...We design and create structure, workshops... We create a funding that fits the city. You tell us what you want to accomplish and we create an infrastructure model... Everything is funded through (*energy ?*) savings. We've done a lot of performance accounting... We seek out every rebate and grant. He refers to irrigation controls in Tacoma, energy efficiency upgrade in Bellingham, projects in Clark County in Vancouver, one costing 5M for which they provided 3.5M. AH asks about interest rates. HW : We work out the best rates you feel comfortable with and agree to. AH : I think we have a good understanding. We will discuss it further... We'll get back to you.*

3 :30 - PUD/Broadband - **RG** : We're trying to go after dollars. After extending fiber from

(county) border to border—we've got a great base—now we want to get fiber into the home. In the past we've applied for a couple of grants and not been chosen. I get really frustrated. « Rural » doesn't mean « rural ». ...For the latest grant we started with the least cost per passage : below Twisp, Pateros, Malott and south Omak, but had a complaint from Charter Spectrum. **JM** : It's going to be up to the grand provider. The federal government is going to use macrodata that say there are existing providers and they don't want an overlap. ...When there are several servers, often they'll push the application to the side and go «Next ». *He describes how broadband is a physical wireline service and will eventually surpass wireless technology in broadband requirements of the FCC or of the state.* **RG** : It's all about coverage. We're giving the servers our plan but they're not giving us theirs. **RH** : In the Methow we applied for a grant and the application was challenged by Century Link. We fought a long time because they reported providing a particular speed which (*in fact*) they were not. It took years to update those, and it eliminated some of the grants we could have applied for ...And we have to look at affordability. Some grants have an actual take rate of people purchasing the services to get to their homes and when we think of the median income of these outlying areas... *She shows map of areas targeted for broadband, divided into sections.*

3 :44 - **CB** : Do you have something in mind with the regular ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds ? We're at the stage where we have know where those funds which we've identified for broadband are going. **DG** : We are trying to stay away from contested areas. **RH** : We've had two applications for the Omak flats area not get accepted for funding and we're meeting with the broadband office to find out where we're going wrong in the application. **AH** : We need to send a letter to the governor saying « you really need to redefine this better because we don't have ten houses on every block. » **CB** : We need to have a collective strategy. *He says he will discuss this with the legislative steering committee for WASAC (association of counties), wonders how cities play into this. An inaudible discussion follows : Twisp doesn't qualify, Brewster has expressed an interest. DG brings up matching funds, one proposal of 10%, another where the match would be higher. CB says ARPA stresses broadband. JM says they are going after an HCIA grant for the Pine Creek area which has never been served, where 261 people live and where two businesses have reached out the the PUD. JM: The valleys aren't straight, it's difficult to serve. We're talking \$5.3M or \$13,00 per home. There are 28 project areas, and a Broadband Committee meeting every month to discuss criteria of grants, how to match areas to meet priorities. Another proposed area is « North-east Okanogan County : Nine-Mile to Chesaw, Molson, down around Sinarep, a « Palmer polygon » of 212 residents.... An area of 1,200 clients would cost \$15M to serve ; a grant could match 25% but they're very competitive. JM hopes the USDA Re-connect program to get to the most rural parts of the nation will come through for them where the state has thus far failed.*

4 :03 - **AH** : We could break ARPA down and spend, say \$1/\$1.5 M on this. **CB** : ...We can use ARPA for the non-matching federal requirements. We talked about half, \$4.1 M going to infrastructure : water, sewer, broadband. It seems like broadband can be done... *He asks about writing off a debt of \$820,000, from non-payment of bills during Covid, reminds them that there is financial aid accessible through Community Action for this, and that « I don't think we're going to spend it all. » AH expresses willingness to fund the Pine Creek project should the grant go through. CB says if the PUD hadn't « put the back bone out for us » they'd be « up a creek ». AH encourages them to share their outstanding debt figure with them. ST thanks them for their help, says they also have lobbyists in Olympia representing them. CB says their lobbyist hasn't been charged with any particular issue. He will try to communicate their need. (4 :26)* **RH** : Is there any way ARPA social assistance funding could help with broadband ? It has become such a huge issue, especially since Covid... The PUD has a limited staff capacity and we've been able to offset some of the things that John's had to do but you don't have money for a grant writer... **CB** : I would more suggest that we be conscious about the associated costs of delivering this

infrastructure... When we address economic impact, we can see if we need all those funds and see how we can offset the associated costs, grant writing etc. **AH** : What's the broadband team's plan of action going forward ? **RH** : Our grant is running out in June. We don't have any specific funds to pay for the contractor Tilson to do the work in the Methow Valley so they have to pay him with other funds. **AH** : What's the work ? **RG** : To do the pre-engineering, the high level design. **AH** : ...That's when you go and pay for it out of this (*ARPA*). **CB** : What we're dealing with now is addressing the replacement of \$25 M in lost public sector revenues. **RH** : Is the goal to have the report in this month ? **CB** : They've extended it but we need to report by next week. **AH** : We wanted the (PUD aid) to be reimbursable because it has to be spent by a certain day in 2026. **CB** : We need to have means to insure the performance– **AH** : and that the money's spent.

4 :42 - *Other Business - Authorization of budget amendment to Public Improvement Fund. in the amount of \$150,000 for the Public Works Building 20-year master plan ; approval of 20-year Master Program project contract with the architect Beeman. CB reflects on the relation between the master plan presentation and the Johnson Controls-Offers presentation. AH says master plan is who goes where and what space do they need, and the latter is about energy consumption and all the possible savings. LJ* : It sounds exactly like the speil Amarasco gave when we were considering the energy project at the Courthouse. **AH** : Fair warning ! **CB** : What I wanted to do to follow up on that was to talk to those jurisdictions and see what went on there. We've got a relationship with them. *They discuss a letter of support to ALTAC for the Twisp Streamflow Restoration Competetive Grant.* **AH** : Theyre using a lot for trail maintenance, 200 plus miles of Methow trails. The trick is, has to be county-owned... LJ says let's not sign. I say do it anyway and hope the committee says in February that it's for county trails. **CB** : We're the bad guys if we don't approve. **AH to LJ** : We have three ALPAC agreements, Pull them out. If they only get \$50,000 instead of \$100,000 they need to scale down the scope of work. *AH also moves to create more water for the Water Trust. Motion carried.*

5 :00 - Meeting adjourned.