

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, October 4th, 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
Larry Gilman (LG), Assessor
David Rodriguez (DR), Coroner
Leah McCormack (LM), Treasurer
Cari Hall (CH), Auditor
Karen Beatty (KB), Central Services
Maurice Goodhall (MG), Emergency Management
Naomi Peasley (NP), Fairgrounds Director
Josh Thomsen (JT), Public Works
Tony Hawley (TH), Sheriff
Kayla Wells (KW), WSU Extension
Charlene Grooms (CG), Courts Clerk

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/Department Heads Quarterly Reports :

- Assessment values up \$1B from last year
- High suicides, overdoses, reflect national trend
- Three Sheriff's hires in training, two more to begin
- Many trials in preparation
- Short-staffed Auditor to ask for help with elections
- Nutrition, Ag teaching posts available through WSU Extension
- Fairgrounds busier than ever
- Morgue, District Court (*Public Works building*) construction scheduled for spring
- Public lands money received
- Master Plan priorities shift to infrastructure; "ridiculous" bids received
- Lack of housing, daycare, hindrances to county hiring
- Guest internet works like a charm
- Sheriff's special employee contract, incentives for sharing workload worked out,
- Burn ban on campfires ends Oct. 7th, other burning to resume Oct. 12th "on recommendation"
- Meeting adjourned at 3:50

2 :06 - **LG** : Assessments will go out this Friday. An increase since last year from \$4.8 billion

to \$5.8 billion is due to new construction (\$100 M) and property assessment increases (\$900M). 2014 law requires property be physically inspected every six years with computer models used in the interim. The levy rate has gone down by 25¢-27¢ per thousand.

2 :10 - **DR** : This year the morgue has had -the highest number of caseloads -the highest number of suicides and overdoses -seven homicide investigations. For one, people moving here are creating an older demographic, and more people are dying at home. As for ODs and suicides, it's a nationwide phenomenon. JD : Fentanyl kills more people annually than murders and car crashes combined. DR : With the new bootleg Oxycodon pill, if you get the dose off just a little bit it can kill.

KB (for Central Services) : Most employees have battery back-ups under their desks. They're beeping. They are going to be replaced at \$90 apiece. We're very close to operating Microsoft 360, a cloud e-mail server. It's working out well. A single log-on, and chatting with Teams to see how long to save documents for records requests.

2 :20 - Sheriff's Update - **TH** : Chief Wright is helping with a lock-down drill at a Pateros school, Chief Worden is at a conference in Tri-Cities. We've been working on emergency communications in the county, the best platforms to utilize, lowering the cost by sharing with Dept. of Transportation. Another funding source is the Sales Tax Initiative approved by voters. We're welcoming back from the Coast this month an officer with 17 years experience who had started out in Twisp, and three people are starting the Academy's next session in February. We're speeding up our system so we don't lose interested people, improving the Civil Service background process to hire faster. We have two hires in the Corrections Academy and one graduating from the law enforcement Academy.

2 :27 - Court Clerk **CG** : We're going to have a lot of staff changes, one retiring this month and I'm leaving in December. We had about 70 people set to go to trial but that figure has come down a bit. I work with the Sheriff's office, validating warrants and protection orders. I check that people haven't been picked up or are not deceased. When the Prosecutor's office gets fully staffed we can get old warrants from the 80's taken off. Our E-filing vendor went out of business and we're on a holding pattern until it is replaced next spring ; only five attorneys were using it at the time.

2 :31 - **CH (Auditor)** : I thank all the departments for turning in their budgets on time. Our accounting software manager lives in Florida. We haven't had news from him in a week and a half (*since the hurricane*) but we're checking every day. As for upcoming elections, we're down one staff member and will talk with the Sheriff about security—we have two boxes to close on election night.

KW (WSU Extension) : We've been asked that all our 4-H volunteers be vaccinated (against Covid). We're actively looking for people interested in taking training to become a Master Gardener volunteer. Two positions available, a Nutrition Educator, grant funded, to work with 2nd and 4th graders in the classroom and for the office at Nespelem an Ag educator, someone who knows traditional Ag, natural resources and gardening, to work with people in the reservation, including in Omak and Okanogan.

2 :37 - (*Treasurer*) **LM** : This is the fourth quarterly meeting where I've repeated « we're two staff down. » I'm retiring at the end of the year. Property taxes are due at the end of the month. We're in the middle of the tax foreclosure process ; the sales date is December 16th. I thank the Sheriff's dept. for physically posting properties. A last thing : with as many jobs that the county has opened, I'm lucky if I can get three applicants. Used to get 20. I want to wish you all well.

NP : I'm preparing for three events at the Fairgrounds Wednesday. We're down a couple of employees. Almost every weekend of 2023 is booked out. We're busy for a couple of years.

CB says he anticipated questions about the architect's master plan. He asks who has heard anything ; DR responds that Deputy Worden has updated him. CB explains that the new morgue will soon be object of a pre-application conference with the city to determine the developability of the property across the river and answer questions regarding cultural resources and a shoreline setback. LM asks about the « blue thing » at the Courthouse. CB explains that it is sealing the top cornices to preserve the building, and that the overhead machinery is always left up to prevent access to the controls.

2 :45 - **JD** : Mike Worden zoomed in from his conference and gave a report. **CB** : we have more money coming in—\$6M for current expenses. (**LM** ?) : We're the only county in the state (to receive that much). **JD** : We're distressed. We lost the mine. It's (*federal*) public lands money. Not ear-marked, recommended for infrastructure. (*Awarded after ten years of dispute.*) **CB** : The discussions amongst us for infrastructure are relative to housing... We have a housing shortage, a barrier to getting people to work for us. But you don't just throw infrastructure in the ground and expect houses to be built. (*This is a frequent topic between CB and AH.*) Someone needs to come along with a project. *JD remarks that their reserve fund target will be reached for the first time ; they'll have to be as transparent as possible. LM is encouraged by interest rates going up for government investing, and having re-invested recently for 2.84%.*

An unidentified participant intervenes : Daycare is also a problem for getting people to come in. We need an internal day-care. That might be something for that bond money. They discuss a Headstart program which is in the process of moving from the old Forest Service building to the Carquest building behind the high school, and Fish and Wildlife needing to move someplace, maybe with the DNR at the Omak Airport Complex.

KB : We put in a radio for guest wireless. It's the highest level fiber. It should work in the next couple of days. **CB** : A guest just reported that the wireless is better. (*AH arrives ; he has been attending union negotiations.*)

AH : There has been much discussion about the Master Plan. (*Architect Michael Beaman*) has sent us back a drawing. **CB** : He was working on the infrastructure side of things. **AH** : With The Coroners/Sheriff's and Public Works buildings, from what Michael reported, we were going to do « shell and core » —all the roof, get everything good to go before finished carpentry. He said with what construction costs are, we should probably do utilities as phase 1—parking, sewer, water—with the bond money. It was never going to be all finished within three years. **LM** : I thought the morgue was going to be ready. **AH** : I meant the Forest Service building. Quotes came in for \$4.2M. Ridiculous. We are going to go out to bid this fall for all three of them. Public Works and Coroner's will be constructed next spring. (3 :01) The Forest Service building is where they recommended to do parking, sidewalks and septic and electric infrastructure to keep costs in line.

3 :03 - *The department heads leave. AC comes back for further modifications to a contract for a special employee through the Sheriff's office in charge of « all things non-investigative » : accounting, grants, budget, administration, operational behind the scenes. Whereas previous contract provisions had been based on other county contracts, comparisons with counterparts for comparatives were \$8 an hour higher. The position is managed through the Drug Task Force, with the county spending \$8,600/year. **AH** : What will this do to the budget ? **AC** : No impact. The full grant payment came through. We have initiated to expand it to a Major Crimes Task Force. It's not possible to have a private investigator but we can have cost-sharing, like Detective Bowling*

having work space with us and usin his knowlege. Methow and Brewster will contribute to this concept. We would like the focus to include property fraud. *He asks for minor updates to two other resolutions, one on the cashing in on leave, 80 hours above the 240-hour cap, and requiring that this not go to retirement. Lateral hires couldn't cash in their leave. These changes will be voted on by the officers. Another resolution deals with overtime translating into double time. This would encourage folks to share the load. It wouldn't impact the budget, being based on already-spent approved wage money.*

AH mentions emailing the architect's new floor plan for the Justice Center. The Clerk's office had complained that the only bathroom was clear on the other side of the floor. AH repeats his desire to bid for the three buildings : ...We were supposed to have spent \$1M this spring. Costs were a lot, around \$200,000 for the design work. Hopefully we'll be close to having all the permits on (the Coroner's building). (3 :40) CB : ...I don't count on anything before I have the conversation. AH : If we don't, then we're going off-bid for two weeks. CB : Then re-position ourselves for whatever facility they need in whatever location. AH : We're not going to raise taxpayer spending more than we need to spend. We might find it's more cost effective (to do it all at once). I'm not as interested in getting totally finished as geting it operational. JD mentions the money from the lands deal, to go for « something that counts for the county », AH : There are reporting requirements on that money. We should make another separate fund.

3 :44 - Emergency Manager MG asks if the public lands money has a deadline. JD says no. MG : On Friday we'll lift the ban for pit campfires. On Tuesday we'll see if we need to extend the ban on wood and permit burns past the 15th. The DNR is allowing some professional burns as of Friday. We've had a couple of (inaudible) burns that people started up on the weekend. One of them actually got away a little bit. It was tough to confront those people asking for water. Motion passed authorizing the lifting of the burn ban, « all on recommendation », says AH.

3 :50 - Meeting adjourned