

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday October 26, 2021 AM**

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC Chair, District 1

Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2, in and out for union contract negotiations

Jim DeTro (JD) – BOCC, District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ) – Clerk of the Board

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer via Zoom. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://countywatch.org> and are not the official county record of the meeting. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later time, see:

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Time stamps below are in real time. To locate specific topics, a clock on the AV Capture video screen at <https://okanogancounty.org/avcapture.html> can assist in finding the correct spot on the video recording.

**Summary of Significant Discussions or Actions: Quarterly update from Larry Gilman, County Assessor: marijuana grows/farms, archive record project, physical inspection cycle beginning in Zone 1 Methow Valley – Carlton north, pest control resolution for taxation purposes, cannabis grow farms – personal property tax – how to collect, also overnight rentals, Public hearing for Franchise renewal Methow Irrigation District continued again – more information is expected from irrigation district, discussion of possible road vacation – possibly Ruby Grade, lengthy discussion regarding collection of personal property tax collection from businesses – wanting to be fair – across the board- not just singling out one business. Road maintenance and public works update.**

9:08 – AV Capture and Zoom Begin. *2 Commissioners (CB & JD in attendance, AH in Union negotiations.*

Civil Deputy David Gecas sent e-mail to BOCC to continue yesterday's executive session discussion this afternoon when all 3 commissioners in attendance. Other attorney, Jenna, will be in attendance. It was determined to do this at 1:45 after public comment in the PM session today.

9:23 Roni (?) is asking if it is all right to have contractor repair vinyl in main bathroom before this open house next Monday. CB states that it probably should be repaired. Unsure if BOCC will be getting bill for this or not.

9:26 LJ is working on a Memorandum for the attorney with the building purchase (*Forest Service Building*) for Chairman of the Board to be authorized to sign documents. LJ hasn't drafted it yet, would be using template from previous purchase many years ago. Should reference parcel #'s especially.

9:48 – Reference to a regional planning assessment and professional fees with CB and LJ

10:00 Larry Gilman (LG), County Assessor and other Assessor Office staff member to give Periodic

update on the Assessor's Office. AH asks whether we do a permit for Marijuana Grow? Currently, there is a Moratorium on new grows. LG reports that scanning of documents for new computer program is more labor intensive and taking longer than expected. He is working with the Title Companies regarding these records. CB states that accessibility would be good for BOCC use as they get calls from the public.

LG – Storage space is needed. This has turned into a 4-5 month project so far.

LG- reports that they are starting the physical inspection cycle again in Zone 1 of the Methow Valley – Carlton north. He reports \$700,000 less revenue than last year. Sales price and volume drive the assessment. Real estate market looks good, but the volume is where their fees add up. \$5 per transaction on a sale.

LG also discusses the problems, once again, with the Pest Control Resolution that was approved for \$1.62 per parcel, but County computer unable to utilize the odd cents – needs to be \$1.60 or \$1.62. Increase would require another hearing, Decrease could be completed timely, but would be a decrease of \$500+ in revenue.

CB states that we need to do this ASAP. AH mentions that we can set the rate every year.

Per LG, unfunded mandates are creating hardship, and has been addressing this with other county assessors. Our biggest concern is our annual assessment – we got started a little late this year.

10:17 – Discussion regarding Cannabis Grow Farms and the Personal Property tax assessed, unable to put a lien on the land because they are mostly leased land. What does County do when businesses are not complying? Is it Cannabis grows mostly, or other businesses also?

10:20 – CB states we are having a moratorium on new marijuana grows due to leases. We need to address all businesses that are subject to the Personal Property tax, rather than just the Marijuana grows/farms. Some discussion about whether there is abuse in other organizations and how widespread it is. This is becoming a big workload for the Treasurer. LG suggests talking with the Treasurer to determine if there is a pattern. He offers that it might just be a lack of education on the part of the growers. Commissioner DeTro is quick to be sure they are not called farmers, but growers.

10:27 – CB to LG – How are we doing on the Overnight Rentals? Personal Property tax on them – just a handful didn't report. LG states they need guidance from the Department of Revenue.

10:29 - \*\*\*\*\*AH back from Union negotiations\*\*\*\*\*

More about overnight rentals – the hardest group to deal with. CB wants to see things fairly applied to all businesses – AH agrees.

LG requests that the next update be in February 2022.

CB and LJ discuss getting together with the Prosecutors Staff regarding the writing of Resolutions. Concerned they do not have enough “teeth” in them. CB would like to be prepared for meeting with Ordinance examples, rather than just have a brainstorm session that might be less productive. LJ states that the Prosecutors office also wants to be prepared.

11:00 – Continued public hearing on the Franchise renewal of the Methow Irrigation District with Jo Ann Stansbury from Public Works. Information has not been received from the Irrigation District so

would like to continue on November 16<sup>th</sup> @11:10. This will be after the irrigation district meets again. Moved, seconded, and carried to continue hearing to that date, and entertain public comment then.

11:05 Discussion of vacating a county road that has been on the County Road list since, at least, 1955. *This appears to be the Ruby Grade, but did not get an accurate description of road Public Works is wishing to vacate.*

11:10 Last Tuesday opened bids for refrigerant removal. Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer, recommends rejecting the only bid as too expensive. Moved, seconded, and carried to reject this bid.

11:12 JT discusses maintenance and road condition. Due to recent rainfall, Public Works is grading everything in readiness for winter. Also, more discussion of vacating road/land. AH wants to know if it is a through road. JT states not, only through private property.

JT also discussed 400 acres of land in the Methow scheduled to be sold to WDFW.

JT discusses staffing in the Methow. They just filled 2 empty positions – one with a former state employee. Public Works is short 1 person in the sign shop.

On consent agenda, bid award for the ½ ton pickup to Jess Auto

11:36 LJ remind BOCC of executive session @ 1:45 PM.

11:37 CB states that there are 82 cannabis farms, some being retail that need to be assessed for personal property. Some may be waiting until the end of the year.

JD leaves, and there is a lengthy discussion between AH and CB regarding Cannabis grows, business license, and whether can refuse CUP permit. It may be an education issue. Both agree on every business should be on an even playing field, rather than singling out the cannabis grows, in particular.

AH- wants to be able to answer people correctly regarding the comprehensive plan.

11:52 CB a bit apprehensive about getting together with PA office without some pre-work. AH sees it more as a brainstorming session but would like to try CB's suggestion. CB feels some pre-work needs to be done in order to have a meaningful conversation, regarding ordinances/resolutions.

Noon – meeting adjourned until 1:30 public comment, and then the 1:45 executive session.