

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, November 15th, 2022, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Jim Detro (JD), County Commissioner, BOH Board Chairman
Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Shelley Kietzman (SK), Human Resources
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:

- *Inflation shows its face in the form of big increases in employee dental and health insurance premiums and salary hikes; possible savings on rates by consulting with unions, on salaries by switching some positions from overtime exempt to non-exempt.*
- *Public Hearing on financing of Current Expense and Road Fund budgets through property tax collection, projected to be lower this year; Assessor says 5% increase needed to compensate drop in levy tax rate from \$1.35 to \$1.20 per thousand; state levy should be lower.*
- *Meeting ajourned at 3:02*

1:40 - **JD**: Best (budget) I've ever seen. **AH**: \$2: in the black. (Possibly referring to having had relief from AARPA–American Rescue Plan–funds.) We have to be diligent but at least we don't have to cut someone's budget just to make something work.

(They chat about JD's heavy equipment business, and an auction he attended in Montana.)

1:56 - Human Resources Update - **SK**: Today I'm the "Grim Reaper". The renewal for dental insurance premiums is up 12.6% from last year, representing a total increase of \$17,000 for the county's 140 employees. A "buy down" could bring the increase down to \$9,400. We have \$63,000 in reserve for claims until the end of the year. We have to leave at least \$12,000. **AH**: Let's pay the \$17,136. I hate to keep cutting the reserve. *SK agrees, says if the increase goes up to 15 or 20% they'll need the reserve. She'll come back Monday to discuss this.* **SK**: Medical premiums for all employees went up by a total of \$113,000 a year, and "LEF" insurance went up by \$11,504 but if you include the families it's more like \$16,000 to \$17,000. *AH rounds this off at \$20,000 and estimates the insurance increase for 2023 at \$150,000.*

Salaries - **SK**: I gave handouts with the salary implementation schedule. \$52,743 is going up by \$13,000. *A separate sheet for (overtime) exempt employees shows a salary of \$73,000.* **AH**: Jesus. **SK**: That's the lowest of the grades. We could talk about making some positions non-exempt. They'd be paid for overtime. There are a lot of these people who have a minimal step to get to the threshold (of exempt status?) but it would be a big impact. For two years the salary stays the

same, then it continues to increase, to \$63,000 or higher. In 2025 it will be twice and a half the minimum wage. I can get input from department heads. Or we can just digest. *AH talks about getting comparisons, keeping some wages in line with others in the same post. SK: I'll bounce it off the Auditor. She's always helpful. AH wonders if unions could recommend plans with better rates for families. SK says time is running out as premiums for January are due early December, so this will be for next year. AH says they'll "bite the bullet". She arranges for LJ to schedule appointments with department heads to discuss their contracts and performance evaluations.*

AH: that bugs me. The ripple effect. **JD:** No end to it. *They discuss changing some jobs to hourly wages. AH: Four years ago it took \$63 to fill the big diesel truck. Now it's \$140.*

2:26 - *LG arrives. AH: What is the valuation of Okanogan County? LG: \$5.93 billion. That includes personal and real property, a ten-year average of assessed, not market value.*

2:30 - Public Hearing for Revenue Sources for District's Following Year's Current Expense and Road Fund Budgets - **AH:** For Current Expense we have consideration of 1% increase to collections, equaling \$62,913, for a total of \$6.8M to be levied; with a 1% increase to the Road Fund the levy will be \$5.57M. **LG:** The Assessor recommends an increase of 5% for adjustments that can wait until the end of the year. The \$6.8M won't be all covered by collections. *Motions are passed to authorize both levy collections.*

2:37 - *1% increases to Emergency Medical Service (EMS) levies bring totals to: (Methow) \$647,000, (Tonasket) \$237,000 and (Oroville) \$32,493.*

2:40 - *LG talks about assessment collection going down, meaning a "levy shift" from \$1.35/1,000 to \$1.29/1,000. LG: First we get the assessment done, then we calculate the rates. LG says there have been only 52 appeals to assessments since the county-wide mailing. LJ: That's not very much. AH: Is the assessed value 100% of the market value? LG: Markets for 2022 are volatile but still higher than assessed values. AH thinks the assessments on his and his family's properties are not excessive. LG talks about values gaining four points against state average rates and the effect this has on levies. AH: I'm glad you're the assessor. I'd rather do algebra. LG: You should see the state levy come down this year too.*

3:01 - **LJ:** We have extra meetings planned for November 23rd and 30th in the morning.

3:02 - Meeting adjourned.