

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, March 22nd, 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
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Dennis Rabidou (DR), Juvenile and Family Services
Dave McClay (DM), CEO, Behavioral Health Organization
Michael Haus, attorney
Anna Burika, attorney
Department Heads :
Leah McCormack (LM), Treasurer
Cari Hall (CH), Auditor
Karen Beatty (KB), Central Services
Tany Everett, Risk Management, Human Resources
Robert Grimm(RG), District Court
Larry Hudson (LH), Noxious Weeds
Pete Palmer (PP), Planning Department
Josh Thomsen (JT), Public Works
Tony Hawley (TH), Sheriff
Kayla Wells (KW), WSU Extension
Joe Poulin (JP), Maintenance

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:** Fairgrounds position scaled down but stretched out; bond proceeds for building projects to shower down in April; new tracking system for county vehicles; Coroner finally found pathologist for homicide case, increase in suicides, overdoses; Goodall says 30% chance minimal flooding, echoes worries about Ukraine fallout; new web page on toxic plants; Master Gardner program blossoms; pot farms acquire permits "en masse", Sheriff mostly pleased about rollback on law enforcement legislation, will welcome three new deputies; Risk Management aided halting of controversial police training technique; Behavioral Health sorely in need of therapists and critical of "Big Health"; BOCC, Human Resources and prospective attorneys discuss Public Defender contract terms.*

1:34 - Resolution passed changing the Fairgrounds Clerk's previously temporary full-time

position to year-long part-time. Two letters of agreement signed approving agreement between Teamsters and Public Works creating a Mechanic 2 position. CB evokes a call from someone concerned about the BOCC discussing the Fair Queen when it wasn't on the agenda. Apparently they were addressing gifting to public funds and need for rules to be followed. CB says he understands how it « struck a nerve » and will explain that it is routine for them to look closely at these issues.

1:50 - **AH** : The HVAC units on order for the Public Works building are costing \$115,000. We should pay for them out of Current Expenses to leave as much as possible in the Capital Facilities Fund.

2:00 - **Quarterly Department Heads reports** - *AH begins by announcing they will receive the bond proceedings on April 17th to go forward with the Public Works building and Sheriff's storage and morgue building, and the architect will get started on the Justice Center.*

JT (*County Engineer*) : A new computerized tracking system which uses cell towers will be useful in getting plows for school buses in winter, tracking vehicles, filing claims, giving times for plow trucks when sander is on or off, and monitoring employees. It can receive engine codes. The cost, \$27-\$29 a month per vehicle, would be less for another department wanting to « jump in ». Six vehicles are now doing three months of free testing.

DR (*Coroner*) reported on 1) difficulty finding pathologist and autopsy services. One was found for the recent double homicide case but they « had to beg » ; 2) Progress (*thanks to « rock star » deputy Mike Worden*) on the building project. The morgue is « a creepy place, with packrats. » It will be enlarged and possibly have an autopsy suite ; 3) Trends in his service : cases went up in 2021 and should be higher this year owing to an increase in suicides, drug related deaths and more people dying at home from natural causes. With fewer patients receiving hospice services, more deaths become coroner's cases. Also, more retired people live here full time. He is busy now with both the homicide case and « dead in bed » cases. CB jokes about putting DR on the radio.

MG (*Emergency Management*) : Snow has low moisture content—a 30% chance of high water and minimal flooding but be prepared. Some people are concerned with the war in Ukraine and the nuclear threat. The state says we should have that two-week stuff ready of power goes out. (*To AH*) : How are things going with security here and in the Courthouse ? **AH** : We're working on it. **TM** (*Maintenance*) : We've been slammed. We're doing way too much stuff down there.

LH (*Pest Board*) : We have a new Area 4 board member lined up. We're getting ready to ramp up our field season. Quite a few calls about toxic plants. Decided to add a page on the website about plants toxic to livestock.

KW (*WSU Extension*) : We have a full-time Master Gardener. A new club is starting in the Okanogan-Omak area. The Covid mandate hit our 4-H volunteers ; we hope growth is coming. There will be a pre-fair event, the first in 3-4 years, at the Waterville Fairgrounds. We'll put a demo garden at Public Works and people are calling for us to set up pest test sites.

CH (*Auditor*) : 2021 had very little costs. We have a small election in April, just 70 ballots will go out to people in Republic. **DG** : We went to a « Cari Hall appreciation meeting. » (*CH gets choked up.*)

DH (Building Dept.) : Business as usual. We've already started because of what Planning did with pot growers. 97 permits last year, over 200 now, most of them for pot growers who were already there (*but not permitted*).

TH (*Sheriff*) : The legislature just rolled back HR 1735's limit on less-lethal options, now just 50 caliber rifles are limited, and we didn't use those anyway. (*The roll-back*) allows for more community care. Before we could only use force at criminal events. CPS, EMS, Fire—we were pretty much precluded from being there. They defined physical force in another resolution signed last week. The problem with this is we need probable cause for reasonable suspicion for someone who is committing, has committed or is about to commit a crime. It didn't help us for using force. Res. 5919 we appreciated for the law enforcement side but it didn't go through because it didn't say « physical force » but went back to the standard of reasonable suspicion for an investigatory detention. It's one of the things I've sent to incoming Prosecutor Lin. We'll be talking about his opinion of this.

At an army recruiting event we hopefully (*attracted*) good, qualified applicants. (*Jokes about the Marine Corps being too far away.*) We're moving restrictions on masking at the jail. Also we were able to get three deputies. Two will graduate July 25th. Takes about a year to get someone up to the patrol side. Everybody across the state wants to get people in those seats. There are two new upgraded camera systems in the jail and where CPS comes in upstairs... We're required to film anyone on video if we're inside. Also we're able now to separate inmates better in the jail. The population is different from when it was built in the 80's ; fewer drunk/disorderly, more violent criminals. And we got Dennis Rabidou (*Juvenile Services*) to talk to the newspaper. **AH** *mentions the BOCC's decision, after a debate on labor issues, to stop housing Douglas Co. inmates* : We're terminating the contract in the interest of providing the best service to people in the county.

TE (*Human Resources, Risk Management*) *announces the swearing in this week of Albert Lin as Prosecutor, saying Bauer who is resigning will stay to help with the transition. Risk management addressed what the sheriff called a liability issue : the use of the « party popper » technique in which two law enforcement officers exit their vehicles, each pulling a taser and a firearm.* **TH** : They are ceasing and desisting at the training site. It hasn't been fully rescinded but it's now called « advanced training ». The problem is they were being trained by non-law enforcement (*L.E.*) people. Last week was the first time they used trainers from L.E.

KB, *Technical Support*, *reported being pleased with the anti-« phishing » program in which employees are trained not to click on malicious-type emails. AH says he got one saying it was from KB and asking for his password.*

3 :00 - Bids for publication of legal announcements - *Whereas previously the Omak Chronicle provided this service, the BOCC compared various examples of publications prepared by Clerk Lanie Johns and chose the publisher of The Methow Valley News/Oroville Gazette-Tribune as the more advantageous of the two.*

3 :30 - Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) update - **DM** : On the positive side, we're fully staffed with new mobile crisis response team and four ECRs (emergency crisis responders). If the mobile team can't deal with the crisis, the ECR will come and bring the person to the Emergency Room. On the down side we lack four adult and two child therapists. And where are we going to house recruits ? If there are rooms available, it could

help... There are 80 to 100 people requesting counseling services. On the bright side, there's a 7% increase in the state budget. But once people get licensed here they leave and make more money in the hospital system or private practice. (3 :37) Health Care Authorities are receiving a 14% but money needs to go to the providers. I would like to see that changed. \$27,000 is thrown into state-only funding... DR : Big health care is traded on Wall Street... Beacon is a bigger, nation-wide provider ; they are state provider of the crisis system. Basically they receive that funding, and they're not the only ones. AH : I didn't know that. CB : The (*tri-county*) Health Authority is meant to have better communication between counties and the state... DM talks about how *Management Service Organizations in order to privilege shareholders and maximize profit don't want to pay the ASOs (group health self-insurance programs for large employers)*... In 15 years working in the field I've never worked for a fully staffed service. The increase in demand and lack of therapists is pushing the acuity rate – a perfect storm... AH: A lot of money is coming into public health. DM: and is it sustainable? The region I came from gave \$40M back to the state, unspent because providers didn't have the ability to apply for the programs. If you do, you're crippling other programs. It's a shell game. They hold all the cards. *They talk about the difficulty in getting all the data, and comparisons between the counties.*

CB: I recently noted Roni Holder Diefenbach's report for the county on sales tax. It would be of benefit to have that section (*Economic Alliance*) talk about *add-ons* : BHO, Fire Relief, support for juveniles – we should brag about that a little bit... Something to be said about a community willing to pass those taxes. Maybe in the next legislative session we should have strategies we can share, collectively identify legislators we need to be working with early in the game. We're usually behind. Those testimonies can make the difference. Covid didn't help. Gotta have personal relationships. Community Action had a lot of money they couldn't spend because it didn't fit the county. It's new director has a background in behavioral health.

DM : From January 1st, 2020 to June 2021 the county has given 26,000 mental health services, all to Medicaid clients. 1,600 were treated for substance abuse (11,000 services) but I would like to do more. DR : We're always hit by who hasn't been served. It's good to hear the other side.

4 :20 - TE : Melissa McDougal who holds the Public Defense contract is resigning. Two people, currently Defense sub-contractors, would like to take the contract and some changes needed to happen to update it. They should provide an order from the court when expert services are approved by the judge to be paid. I added that the County should have an agreement with the Conflict Council Services. CB : Rather than with the Defense ? TE : Yes.

4 :30 - MH and his associate AB arrive. He is a « recovering elected official », former Truman/Jefferson Co. Prosecutor ; she has worked with the Okanogan Land Trust and Indigent Defense. MH mentions scarcity of real estate. **AH** : Welcome to my world ! **MH** : I see us taking on a maximum load of 150 cases. Complex ones like the double homicide would count for five/six. *They agree that one client shouldn't have different lawyers if they are tried in both district and superior courts.* AH says a proposed contract change allowing for lodging expenses when, for conflict of interest reasons, someone is tried outside the county, should be further discussed. They also discuss if the Conflict Council, which deals with these cases and cases with multiple defendants, should be paid \$100/hour to select attorneys. TE suggests they make a request for qualifications so as not to rely on attorneys. They talk about the termination clause which provided 30 days to wrap up cases in the event a lawyer is fired. TE has lengthened it to 180 days so the new lawyer's services will overlap.

CB says they will have the Prosecutor review the contract. MH offers to be a liaison with legislators. He says Washington is the worst state in the nation when it comes to funding the court system.

5 :12 - Meeting adjourned