

Department of Public Health / Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, March 9th, 2021, 1:30 PM

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Present:

DOH meeting:

Lauri Jones, Public Health Director
Mariann Williams, Board of Health
Jim Wright, Board of Health
Dave Hilton, Environmental Health
Dr. James Wallace (JW), County Health Officer
Board of County Commissioners

BOCC meeting:

Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1
Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk

Time stamps refer to three recordings on website.

Health Dept. Monthly Meeting: *Good progress on containing Covid despite recent "hump"; A quarter of the county already vaccinated, at least in part; Johnson & Johnson vaccine has arrived, will be used on program for ag workers, vaccines also available to business people starting the 22nd; some jail inmates and staff vaccinated; in letter to Labor & Industry commissioners complained about fines to small businesses for non-compliance; fine given for illegal septic tank; workshop planned for DOH; advantages and disadvantages seen if regionalization of county health succeeds in legislature.*

BOCC Meeting, Summary of Important Discussions: *letter drafted to request grant money for emergency communications equipment, internet infrastructure, needs assessment for jail/juvenile court and possibly bridges; CB describes work of Collaborative for Forest Health and its diverse representation; One post created, one reclassified and one defunded on the Noxious Weed Board; AH and CB discuss the fallout of the Ecology decision based on Campbell & Gwinn/water permit and subdivision moratoriums and subsequent appeal, implications for Okanogan watershed and how to move forward.*

Health Dept

3:22 - Mix-up led to a redundant request for reimbursement of a voucher, must refund the reimbursement. 7:22 - Rescinding of Resolution 2020-01, reimbursement rate for travel mileage 27.575¢/mile. 2021 rate is 56¢/mile. Dr. Wallace commends Dept.'s efforts to lower Covid figures from last summer's peak, attributes recent hump in cases to people feeling safer, cautions against traveling and gathering: "We're not out of the woods yet." Third vaccine, Johnson & Johnson, here and as of 3/22 will go out to a "long list" of business people including food and ag workers, firefighters and police. People encouraged to get on waiting list regardless of their category. A caller

asks if people can get one more type of vaccine; JW says no. LJ: 25% of co. is vaccinated with at least the first shot. Okanogan is ahead of the majority of counties. (24:22) Process efficient thanks to \$53,000 upgrade of Everbridge module which registers people county-wide (also will be used for fires, other natural disasters.) Difficulty getting interface to work with state immunization system. Federal program is training people to soon start giving the Johnson & Johnson doses to ag workers through Three Rivers Hospital in Brewster. Walmart will be distributing 100 doses Thursday 3/11. (28:06) Jail inmates and workers have already received 30 doses. Oroville and Tonasket pharmacies vaccinating, LJ waiting to see if others will.

29:41 - AH mentions letter sent to Labor & Industry asking to remove fines on small businesses for non-compliance. CB signed it to protest inequalities in the attribution of fines but regrets defending non-compliance. LJ reticent on letter: "It feels like rewarding bad behavior." JD concerned about President's letting Mexicans in at the border whether they test positive or not, and reports decease of a friend after receiving second dose of vaccine. Discussion focuses on what LJ calls the "strong arm" of L&I. AH complains that Gebbers was fined despite efforts to comply. CB: It's incumbent on us to get out there and see what's happening." LJ, on Walmart which stayed open despite an outbreak in their food department: They have more money than the state altogether," infuriated at her difficulties crossing into Canada while permission granted to truck drivers. "If they can test the NFL every single minute..." But she is satisfied that every part of the county is getting vaccinated.

46:37 - Environmental Health - DH distributing a lot of permits for this early in the season, reports catching "a bootlegger" hooking up a septic tank off of 97 who didn't have a septic permit or a building permit. (57:00) Subjects for a spring DOH retreat/workshop - LJ: Foundational funds have helped in past with food, septic water, space for Env. Health, and since Covid, computer systems. CB - Our effort should be towards education programs and not fining. LJ appreciates work of communications team. AH - A board position to write for grants? Regionalization of Public Health (Bill 1152) - LJ could help with funding, direction would be in Wenatchee. CB says wouldn't take away county health officers, will create bureaucracy and cost more. "Struggle not to be sucked into a bigger system." AH says to set aside a monthly public meeting to spend time discussing mission of DOH. LJ: really need to bring up salaries, nursing staff. April date set.

BOCC Meeting, first recording

7:50 - Preparation for submitting needs possibly covered by a \$80,000 grant. Deadline 3/15. Priorities: 1) emergency communication, 2) internet infrastructure, 3) needs analysis for jail/correction center. State also seems open to financing work on bridges in Omak (already partially funded) and the Methow. CB proposes to ask State Transportation Commissioner what his priorities are, and include Economic Alliance's Roni Holder-Diefenbach in the conversation.

31:37 - CB asks about HB 1168, concerning long-term forest health and the reduction of wildfire dangers. He has spoken with people in Chelan Co. and from the Forest Health Collaborative who support it but seek more interaction with citizens. CB: talked with Oregon timber expert Tom Partin who wants to publish a letter in the newspaper about commercial forestry. "Everyone is at the table, those that maybe will appeal it." Says collaborative did like the way the Twisp Restoration Project developed and prefers a phased approach for dealing with the Forest Service, and that many aspects of restoration are considered. "I ask, 'Do you consider cattle grazing a component of forest management?' 'Is there anybody bent on removing cattle from the forest?' because we need to talk about it." Players range from industry to Okanogan Land Trust, which provides a technical viewpoint, (42:36) to Nature Conservancy, interested in stewardship. AH favors increasing the prescription to 40 and 60 (per acre?) depending on visibility. Says the Loup is light at 18, elsewhere heavy. "I lean towards a thinner size of forest...We have to manage as if we allowed the forest to manage itself. It would be a lot thinner because of fires." CB - Have to take into account utopians,

believers in “deep ecology”...”I’d prefer a conversation.” AH: “We argue, but at the end of the day there’s not too much disagreement on the way things should get done.”

52:35 - Discussion on the importance of knowing each other’s positions on things, on reserving most actions for the presence of the whole board. Differing opinions on water meters; AH speaks of fears of being taxed for water, CB of fears that the Methow will be overrun with people. AH: I agree. Instream flows? Use scientific data to determine water needs for fish and what if a 2° temp. change? JD: In Alaska some years there’s a run, others, not.” CB: Same argument.

1:08:20 - Noxious Weed Board - Resolution 27-2021 creating new Lead Field Technician post, reclassifying one current Lead Field Technician to Lead Field Tech. and defunding Noxious Weed Assistant Manager position approved. Resolution 30-2021 allowing two employees to be paid with one bars code temporarily within the Auditor’s offic approved.

1:10:30 - Moratorium and water rights - AH brings up the case of long time Methow resident owning a piece of property separated from their farm and upset by the subdivision moratorium preventing her from selling the property and, if water transfer bill had gone through, leasing the water right, making them unable to continue to farm. (*interruption in recording*) (*2nd recording*) Discussion of possible purchase of 8,300 acres in the Tunk Basin by Conservation Northwest, without water right. Campbell & Gwinn applies, says CB. Difference of opinion with AH who says group use applies in the Okanogan watershed; The Methow rule sets out that there’s no group domestic use; rights in order of priority to single domestic, stock water, instream flow, public water supply, municipal and industrial use, all interruptible. In Methow the reservation is for single domestic use only. But RCW 4099 sets out fines for impeding the streamflow. AH says on Okanogan side planning was poor, that no drilling should have been allowed or the 100-tract subdivisions. “If you ask me if Campbell and Gwinn is appropriate, I say ‘yes’.” Discussion on how rulings in the past didn’t consider problems encountered in the present, the ambiguity of Cambell & Gwinn because no right to challenge a decision after 21 days. CB points to fact that treaties with Indians have been changed because things were understood in a different way at the time, implies that we can’t change what was done just because “the interpretation gets changed to something no one expected.” AH: “When it comes to making decisions, do we have to go to court, or make a watershed update to change land use practices?”