

Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting May 10, 2021 AM session

CB—Chris Branch, BOCC chair, District 1  
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC vice-chair, District 2  
JD—Jim DeTro, BOCC member, District 3  
LJ—Lalena Johns-clerk to the Commissioners  
DH – Dan Higbee, Building Department head

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note takers comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://www.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 <https://okanogancounty.org/Commissioners/Minutes%202021/2021%20Minutes%20Page.html>

The time stamps refer to the times on the AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date. Click [here](#) to go to video.

### **Summary Of Significant Discussion**

**2:25 – Casual discussion about Covid19, crowds, etc.**

**4:24 – DH requests approval to purchase new truck**

**8:30 – Discussion about efforts to improve service to public regarding permitting (increase hours for employee, purchase new software).**

**14:25 – General discussion about increasing population in county, how to manage growth.**

**34:35 – Discussion about something regarding the Fairgrounds.**

**39:40 – Discussion about funds available to replace transmitter for TV District #1**

**52:00 – Discussion about lawsuit in Yakima County regarding transparency of board meetings.**

00:00 - Discussion about changing the agenda (move Dan Higbee up from 10:30 to 9 am)

2:25 - Discussion about 49er days attendance and fact that very few people were wearing masks. JD comments that there must not have been any Democrats there. AH mentions that around Christmas he was in Leavenworth and saw very few masks so it must be OK if you are outside. CB comments that he saw a lot of people in Spokane wearing masks because the Covid rates are high there. AH responds that we actually have some pretty high numbers here.

4:24 – Dan Higbee, building dept, requests approval for purchasing a new truck for the Building Dept. BOCC votes to approve.

8:30 – Discussion turns to general conversation about supply chain issues.

9:38 – DH requests that an employee be upgraded from part time to full time. Due to increasing number of building applications. CB mentions that building apps are up regionally –

Chelan County has a 2-3 month waiting time for approval. DH says that we are currently at around 3 weeks.

11:50 – AH asks DH if building Dept has \$\$ in budget to pay for the proposed software program that would integrate the permitting process. Short discussion about the program and how it could save time and improve communications between departments. Generally supportive – planning and building departments are on board, not sure how health dept. feels.

14:25 – Discussion about building boom and how it is affecting different areas of the county. Contractors are booked out about 1-3 years. Conversation turns to issues of population increase, shortage of affordable housing and what are the causes. CH asks BOCC what they think is the reason behind the lack of housing, and if there is anything the BOCC can do. AH responds that restrictions on water, the ability of people to work from anywhere are a big part. Talks about the importance of broadband. CB brings up the issue of overnight rentals and how they affect available housing for permanent residents. Gives some examples of Chelan county and how the nightly rental situation is a problem. Discussion about enforcement and how to increase monitoring of nightly rentals. CB mentions idea of a tax on nightly rentals that would be applied to affordable housing. AH says that is a good idea, but the only way to deal with affordable housing is the housing trust model. The issue is that it can't be done in the county – only in the towns. Discussion about mechanism of housing trust and how it works. Talking about concentrating growth in towns, and the water rights that would be necessary to accomplish what is needed. CB focuses conversation on what the BOCC can do. AH mentions that he has changed his position and is now a big proponent of focusing growth in the urban expansion areas. Mentions that DOE is an obstacle in obtaining the water that is necessary.

29:35 – JD asks about status of funding the Smokejumper base. Discussion about USFS and funding their travel management plan.

33:00 – AH reports that he met with CCT about working together on projects. There was no firm decisions made but there is discussion about having an interlocal agreement.

34:35 – CB mentions that he received a phone call from Naomi Peasley (Fairgrounds manager) but had not returned it. Wondered if AH or JD knew what it was about. Curious conversation about something that CB needed to be aware of, but AH and JD make a concerted effort to not reveal what the specific issue is.

36:40 – LJ discusses scheduling of meetings in coming weeks. Mentions that grant for courthouse (\$265K) has been funded by the Governor.

39:40 – LJ mentions a donation for TV Dist 1 to replace transmitter and how the funds would be managed (can funds be passed through the County to the TV District?) Discussion about the details of how to do this.

45:00 – LJ reports that she has spoken with Lael Duncan about getting an extension on a grant in order to have more time to spend the funds. Public hearing schedule on May 8<sup>th</sup> for another CDBG grant.

46:14 – LJ mentions an error with a number on a consent agenda item (Ordinance to repeal the Oroville Advisory committee). Discussion about whether a public hearing is required.

52:00 – CB asks other BOCC members if they have received an e-mail about a lawsuit in Yakima County regarding their health board. AH says yes, but he has not read it yet. (They move on to other topics while AH reads the e-mail).

54:15 – LJ updates BOCC on new website. Mentions that Board and Committees will be under their own heading, talking about how to handle the agenda- there are several options. The launch date has been moved to next week because people are still giving their input. CB mentions that he sent the WSAC (WA State Assn of Counties) folks the link to the new website to get feedback from them as they have people with a lot of experience and thought it would be useful to have feedback from a third party.

57:00 – AH responds to e-mail about Yakima health dept lawsuit. Says he can't comment without more information. Mentions that Okanogan County Board of Health has their Zoom meeting information on the Public Health website.

58:40 – CB asks LJ to contact Dave Gecas about some language in a dog control petition.

59:30 – Conversation resumes about whether the BOCC should go beyond what is legally required in assisting the public with access to information about meetings. AH feels that public needs to take more responsibility for finding the information they need. CB suggests that it doesn't hurt to make a small extra effort to help public access to Zoom meetings.

1:03:55 – adjourn until after lunch.