

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, May 25th, 2021, 1:30 PM

"These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized. 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 the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at <https://www.okanogancounty.org>."

Present:

Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2

Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk

Via Zoom:

Lael Duncan (LD), Community Action Director

Ruth Hall (RH), Malott citizen, County Watch

Time stamps refer AV Capture recording on County website.

Summary of Important Discussions: *Malott resident says some kind of speed limit change is needed on the old 97 highway to avoid deer from being killed, especially at night. CB agrees to pursue the issue with Public Works; AH looking at ways to incorporate \$180,000 in "static" Mazama Water Quality Fund moneys into a common project; second public hearing held to legitimize payment of Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) funds to sub-entity Community Action for the purpose of granting housing relief to low and moderate income households, especially in the form of mortgage assistance, excluded from previous aid programs, and allowing homeowners participating in low income housing exemption from energy requirements; CB proposes imitating other counties by encouraging the Watershed Council to merge with the Watershed Foundation to facilitate partnership in land use planning; AH suggests rewording of meeting minutes to better reflect his attitude toward necessary spending; CB toys with the idea of a "framework for equity" in the spending of federal Covid relief funds; AH is looking to aid from Ecology to update and expand water monitoring process in the Methow.*

2:28:28 - Public Comment Period - RH: Half mile of stabilizer on the Chiliwist Road is great! Also, (people) have been talking for years about changing the speed limit at the top of Ophir Grade on the old 97 between Malott and Brewster. So many deer are getting hit. It was worse after the fire but it's still bad. Montana has a night-time speed limit of 45 mph, and it makes sense. CB: I talked to Public Works director (about) night-time signs. He said he'd give it some thought. Josh (Thomson) knows the road, and there have been other complaints from the same area. RH: I thought there would be a hearing. CB: ...The last change (Greenacres Rd.) We just did it. On RH's "wish list": bicycle trails alongside of roads.

2:38:09 - AH would like to be able to use the Mazama Water Quality Fund for data-gathering. "If we could fund a CRM process or watershed update, I would like to explore that. CB: "...A watershed planning partnership would be part of what we have...Looks do-able, needs a framework--would be related to initiating governments. (They read over watershed legislation.) AH: We should go on a Watershed Council website...get familiar with that, things to update. CB: (reading) "Legislators of local entities may authorize spending of up to 10%." This fund isn't in use now. \$180,000 is static money...(JD arrives.)

2:58:28 - *Public hearing on Community Development Housing Needs which is required by law in order for the County to allocate \$172,917 proposed to be made available in a Community Development Block Grant. Low to moderate income families, targeted by the grant, were thus given an opportunity to present their views on how the funds should be spent.* LD: Money we received in December was intended for mortgage payments or utilities fallen behind, water, sewage, PUD... We've had a lot of rental assistance so we're going to prioritize mortgage... (This) targets lower to moderate income... (Is) open to more people than utility assistance. (Talks about rental assistance that was contingent upon environmental review; this funding is more flexible.) JR: I know a younger couple who moved in with a widowed parent. Their house is vacant but they wouldn't qualify (to rent it through rental assistance program) because it's not energy-efficient. Any funding that could apply so they could rent it under your program? LD: They could offer it to a tenant for rent without meeting all those qualifications. JD: Through you? LD: Yes... They could command a decent amount of rent. A lot of possibilities out there. CB: So there's different assistance from section 8, without the same requirements. (LD leaves meeting) I'm glad you (JD) asked that question. I know someone in the exact same circumstance. AH: (joking) I'm about to buy myself an RV and let rent pay for the house and the RV!

3:16:06 - LJ: Here's the Mutual Aid Agreement with Public Health. Dave at the Prosecutor's Office noticed some inconsistencies. (CB signs.) AH says they've waited to approve the minutes from May 10th, 11th, 17th and 18th because he didn't say the Watershed Foundation wasn't a legal entity, but that it was a non-profit. AH: I don't know that the County could direct a non-profit to pay services rendered by the Watershed Council. CB: The Watershed Council was created as an advisory group by the legislature and has no way to receive funds unless it's part of business that we're doing. LJ: The funds have to go through the foundation. CB: I did research ... Walla Walla had the same (kind of advisory group) as the Methow but eventually merged with a non-profit support entity... so they can make agreements with the county... It's a viable option for us. AH: I just went through the rigmarole about merging; I was not for it because I don't think (inaudible). CB: Some collect information, get grants from Ecology, have citizen involvement training programs... AH: That's good, good thoughts.

AH also asks LJ to modify wording on the Forest Service Building renovation project, as she had put the projected cost, approximately \$50 million, in big bold characters. "That leads them to think that I'm thinking \$50 million is a big deal. Could we say "Renovation costs in the construction of the new juvenile detention are estimated to be..."? CB (laughing): AH thinks it's a drop in the bucket. AH: No, that's why nothing gets done, it's a big decision." (Talk of costly renovation of county building in 2019.) CB: You'll regret it if you cut corners.

CB: In the \$8 million we're getting from the Feds (in Covid relief) I've been looking at other counties around the country. One in the Midwest created a framework for equity. They put categories in boxes, looked more in depth at areas to us money for. It's a way to communicate, so that the public can understand. AH: We're paying back the money lost by the county, public health, and broadband. That's the top of my list. JD: It might be the only opportunity to expand broadband.

3:45:47 - AH: (taking up again the issue of the Mazama Water Quality Fund) There's a whole lot of money granted by the Department of Ecology. So if the rates were assessed prior to wells being built, then (they) refunded money to the people to monitor, they had to have money to drill wells. With some of this information we could persuade the Department of Ecology to let us expand this water monitoring system that they set up. Ron Poretto and Paul Christen both commented about expanding the whole thing to the town of Methow, the whole water quality monitoring... we should do other research to look at funding an update process...

3:47:40 - Meeting adjourned.