

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, June 22nd, 2021, 1:30 PM

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Present:

Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 2
County department heads
Conconully Lake cabin owners

Time stamps refer to the time on the wall clock. See AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date at https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php.

Summary of Important Discussions: *In comment period Methow resident Isabelle Spohn recalls that the County is legally bound to appointing advisory boards to participate in the Planning process. **Quarterly departmental reports:** assessor announces more frequent assessments, is pleased with sharp drop in number of appeals; Building permits up 40%; Sheriff's office has liability concerns and questions following a new state legislation that has them "close to panic"; jail waiting for heating-cooling system fix; Coroner says state Covid cases and deaths down but overall deaths way up; Emergency Manager warns of 111° this weekend and may soon need interdepartmental help for big fires; Lakes being treated for milfoil, river to be treated; HR director attributes hiring crisis to high unemployment benefits; changes in Critical Areas ordinance following public comment will be subject to review, comp plan out and new software to help with well assessment and permitting; County set to buy old Forest Service Building but use as juvenile facility subject to change in use contract. **Other discussion:** Owner of cabin on Conconully Lake proposes changing county code to limit boat speed but is outnumbered by other lake-dwellers attached to broad recreational use; commissioners need clarification of PUD's request to use aid dollars to pay for utility arrears.*

1:30 p.m. - Public comment period. Isabelle Spohn (IS), Methow Valley, urges commissioners to comply with county code by either appointing citizens to Planning Commission advisory boards or delegating the commission to do so: There are a lot of issues in the Methow: water use, building, endangered species...(1:40 p.m.) Some have been offering and offering to talk to the County, or wanting to serve on (the board). Some members (of the last board) didn't even live or work in the county. CB: (It's a question of) equity and fairness. We're not going to tell Methow people how to (inaudible) their valley. I see town hall-style meetings, people hearing each other's input (but) we have a legal review. If we (deviate from that), won't get the comp plan done. JD: last time Methow people...wanted stronger input. We accepted...then they litigated anyway. IS: We wouldn't be in trouble if there had been. Take time to assemble landowners, residents...Once the comp plan is formed they can go immediately into action.

1:58 - Quarterly Departmental head reports:

Larry Gilman, Assessor, has sent out annual assessment notices averaging a 5% increase. Last year's assessment, the first in seven years, represented an increase of 30%. LJ mentions that there

have only been six appeals. LG: Before, we had over 100 but with the digital age people are "aware of what's going on."

2:05 - Dan Higbee, Building Official: An increase of 40% in building permit applications. Winthrop hired someone today who we'll have to train. Prices are through the roof.

2:12 - Mike Worden, Sheriff's Deputy for Communications: A heavy duty legislation is changing what law enforcement has the ability to do. Liability... Trying to sort out what it means (for us), for Dispatch--can they and will they respond? We're in close to a panic. Must sort it out with the Prosecutor. (*Staffing shortage, dept. seeking viable candidates.*) Radio improvements won't affect this fire season but will be in place for 2022. Don't want to repeat Pitcher Hill. (*CB asks about PUD plan to be able to shut power off in some places, MW says plan is for extreme weather, 60 MPH winds and low humidity, doesn't know if that means gusts or sustained wind.*)

2:15 - Tammi Denney, Chief Corrections Officer: Heating-cooling system needs fixing. Don't know when we'll be able to open up.

Dave Rodriguez, Coroner: Statewide, Covid numbers are down, deaths rates are down, but our flat numbers of people dying are up, way ahead of anything we've ever seen. More of everything. Suicides. Covid related? Don't know. Bed occupancy up all across the state with people who couldn't before and can now have elective surgery. Light at the end of the tunnel but not for health care workers.

Maurice Goodhall, Emergency Management: Going to be 111° this weekend. We ask for help in big fires--think of who you could send our way to help us, at the call center or out in the field to figure out what's going on. It's best if they can stay a couple of days.

Karen Beatty, Central Services: We're working on forms online, public records requests for court. Each department has the possibility--we can help you with that. There's an "E-Notify" (button) for people to get informed if there are any changes on the (new) website... CB: Central Services has accommodated requests for changes (but) some stuff is hard to find. I agree with Commissioner Hover that if people use the search button that's the way to go. (*KB says they're going to new email server, testing security software Sentinel 1.*)

Robert Grim, District Court Judge: Good website, thank you. We're still doing Zoom except occasional jury trials. Room in Courthouse for those (who can't do Zoom). Two open positions, difficulty finding candidates to move to the county. Judge Short was recently selected to be District Court Judges Association President for next year.

2:30 - Lauri Jones, Public Health (via Zoom): We've plateau-ed on vaccinations. "Mass Vacc" on Fridays at Agriplex til July 23rd. Cases up this week (in Methow). Hoping the governor will announce his illustrious reopening; it won't preclude wearing masks at sites like the jail or congregate settings or health care.

2:34 p.m. - Larry Hudson. Noxious Weeds: Understaffed, sending applicators to people who signed up, some grant funding, treatment for milfoil at Spectacle, Osooyoos and Patterson lakes. Okanogan River treatment dates will be sent out on the Emergency Notifications site, radio and newspaper. Two assessment payers adamant about not paying, am concerned it will result in a foreclosure or a lien. L.Johns (LJ): people can write in and say they don't feel they should pay. CB: People in Osooyoos voted on it.

Tany (Craig) Everett, HR, Risk Management: Struggling to fill vacancies. It's not special to this

county. People getting \$300 a week on top of unemployment. They're changing it to require five searches a week but people still being paid, and no verification. (2:40) Needing people for road crews in the Methow. We have Public Safety Testing here for civil service positions and Dispatch testing (soon to be a third job opening). If (people) want to see what a job entails, get a hold of Tammy (Corrections), Mike (Dispatch) or Pete (Planning chief in search of GIS analyst).

Josh Thomson, Engineering: Old 97 paving project will be done by end of week; people haven't been going along with what flag crew says. Problem finding people--we will train maintenance workers and they can pay it back. Short three out of six truck drivers in the Methow, will be hard once snow starts.

Leah McCormack: One thing about Covid, people pay property taxes. 60% have paid. But have to watch spending. 2:50 - Kayla Wells, WSU Extension: Been working past year on Capstone project. The needs assessment is ready to go out on line and on paper beginning next week. Students will be crunching the data: people's satisfaction with where they live, neighborhoods, outdoor recreation, what brings people to and keeps them in the county. They are willing to come her and give a presentation on the results.

Evan Makrinikolas, Veterans' Services: We're looking for a part-time worker to talk trash to the veterans.

2:55 - Pete Palmer, Planning Director: Critical Areas Ordinance and Comp Plan out for public comment, changes to be made following some comments on Critical Areas Ordinance so another public review will be necessary. Well-tracking software will help with planned addendum to WRIA 49 and give better idea of how much water left in the reserves in the Methow area. Ready to form planning advisory groups in the Methow so watch the newspaper. Permit software will tie Planning Dept. in with Building Dept., (provide) zoning map, properties from realtors, especially water use in processing permits. Fee schedule ready, rough draft for clearing and grading ordinance going to legal review, then to the public. Not a lot of luck filling position, (also) GIS dept.'s Ted (Murray) retiring.

CB: The Building Dept. ...supports itself. Hard to charge people the fees to cover what it costs for the planning process. Same with Health Dept., it affects current expenses in every dept. ... We're looking to buy the old Forest Service building. The "big move" being defined now, offices in the county. We've contemplated having juvenile detention there but there's a conditional use contract to work out.

(End of department head reports)

3:05 - Mike Ray (MR), cabin owner on upper Conconully Lake (via Zoom): I would like to see an amendment to County Code 8.52 on boating regulations to include the upper lake in an 8 mph speed restriction...It's a skinny lake where many cabins are, 200 yards wide. Speeding watercraft causes more erosion there and can damage dock structures. Could they consider the limit where the cabins are? Peg Calloway, on behalf of Chris Culp: ...This is a multi-recreational lake. If it goes up to the cabins, the limit takes away from the use of the lake. (3:17) It was considered before; warrants taking a look at who uses the lake...we can't go with one use. Dale Damskov: Summer months there's a lot more recreational use than fishermen. Ron: We negotiated a treaty with the fishermen. They get their time in the morning and evening and times are extended in the hottest months (for recreation.) MR: I'm concerned about the erosion on road and docks. JD: for erosion to happen it would have to be above the high water mark. Below it's just stone. (3:30) CB: I would be interested in further discussion but if the code people have agreed upon isn't being violated, I don't a need to (change it). Send me your email and I'll tell you what process is available to you to make your case.

Other business: approved Contract for Health Care Authority Criminal Justice Treatment (HCACJT) (3:55), LJ reads a PUD request for the county's position on use of Covid/ARPA funds for people behind on utility bills. CB: Who's eligible for that? Going to write off everybody's arrears? What is their income level? ...Their proposal needs to be better defined...JD: I agree we need more clarification. LJ says she'll send an email. License for a Winthrop Firefighter Association's event in a park is approved.

4:21 - Meeting adjourned.