

Okanogan Board of Health
Tuesday, July 12th, 2022, 1:30 PM

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Present:

Lori Jones (LJ), BOH (Board of Health) Director
Mariann Wright (9MW),
Mike Carr (MC), BOH, Environmental Health
Patricia Stanton, Okanogan City Council, BOH board member
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member
Jim Detro (JD), County Commissioner, BOH Board Chairman
Andy Hover (AH), Commissioner, BOH board member
Jill Gates, BOH, secretary
Gail Casper, Director, WSU College Bound, Omak
Liz Walker (LW), Methow Valley Clean Air Project
(Via Zoom :)
Chuck Zimmerman (CZ), attorney
Winnie Adams (WA), interim CEO, Mid Valley Hospital
Holly Stanley, Finance Coordinator, Mid Valley Hospital
Diana Osborne, Mid Valley Hospital
Carey Alexander, community member
Tim Wright, community member

Methow's Clean Air Project distributes filter-fan systems to counter ever-worsening impact of wildfires on indoor air quality; apparent power struggle at Mid Valley Hospital: following three commissioner resignations interim CEO blasts two-member board's hasty appointments; \$100,000 for septic inspections, computers, data collection and Covid taken from reserve fund, septic permits still booming; new health district charter discussed, Lionel Orr added to Health Board, rate-setting to be limited to elected members; Covid numbers higher than last year, dizziness first symptom of BA5 variant, probable rise in hospitalizations; in Environmental Health report Mike Carr supports "bite" for compliance, Hover regrets law suits tied to building permit refusal, site analysis must be first step in building process, CB urges county ordinance making permit non-compliance an infraction subject to fines. Meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Methow Valley Clean Air Project - LW : We're building a « smoke-ready » community, supporting the most vulnerable members. The wildfire season is going to get even longer. It's going to get three times worse between now and 2050.. It's not just heart and lungs but other negative impacts as well. The other piece is that many buildings are older. During (*heavy*) smoke, indoor air quality is not much better than outside. That includes government offices, schools. The best defense is a 20x20 inch box fan with a filter, which costs \$40 and will clean one room. We received an EPA grant to distribute 250 of them. We have given away 2,600. Only 20% of people clean their indoor air. We have 16,000 houses left to go. (*We hope to equip*) dental and medical clinics. Next month I'll be back to talk some more. **JD** : Do the filters have the same ability through a heat pump ? LW : ... They aren't on this level yet.

(Someone asks how long the filters last.) It's hard to estimate—maybe 14 days, maybe the whole season. If it turns black, change it.

Mid Valley Hospital Resignations - WA : Three members of the Board of Hospital Commissioners have resigned. Their reasons include declining health and differences of opinion with the rest of the board. We have concerns about the rapid appointment of three members. (Chairperson) Lagrou wanted to « turn the ship around »... Commissioner Lagrou was asked to participate in mediation... She answered that she would think about it. We have an investigation firm to ensure (inaudible). All communications are to be directed to me... We wanted you to be aware of the state of affairs. If they are unstable here, the health of the county is in jeopardy. **JD**... We've allowed you to go before the Board of County Commissioners, go on record. We've had a discussion. **MW** : Who is on the board right now ? **WA** : Evon Lagrou, Ellen Delaney, (and new appointees) Becky Corson, Dr. Rick Johnson and Rebecca Christopher.

LJ : Having known her since the early '90s, I have confidence in Winnie as interim CEO. It's unfortunate what is happening. Hopefully there will be a good resolution for everyone involved... I have confidence in this group you see present.

CB : The hospital is in my district. I'm also a consumer of health care there and concerned about how things unfold. You have two members that have moved quickly. I came into the middle of their meeting. I have sent a letter, had talked with the BOCC. Because the appointees are until the next election... I asked in the letter (to slow down) because (there's) an elected position, in this case the CEO, being appointed... If we had the same rule with the BOCC, and if I was the only one standing—Things can change based on personalities. It has to do with how the board is appointed : two choose one, then three choose two... **JD** : Thanks Chris. I hope by Winnie being proactive you'll be getting the message to the people, which was refused at the meeting. Thank you.

CB : (concerned about intervention on the part of the Legislature and the need to show what health boards are capable of at the local level) The better we react, the better chance to retain local control. (He gives the examples of North Valley Hospital and the Tonasket School Board.)

Finances - \$100,000 has been transferred from the reserve fund toward septic inspections, computers and data collection and Covid (impact ?). **MC** : Septic permits are booming in the Methow and Aeneas valleys, like previous years. Normally we would start to see a decrease because of prices but it's going to take a couple of years to see (one) because you have to apply separately for a building permit. *Financial report and vouchers approved.*

LJ : We've received an increase of \$5,600 to improve vaccination rates, at least for (making) information (available). By providing language-appropriate information, « Village Reach » can get ads online, on social media.

JD (explaining the need for « suspension and disbarment policy and procedure » after the past year's hacking incident) : Since the randomware attacks, we have to get another policy.

LJ says James Wallace, Health Officer, cannot give his report because he is busy in surgery.

Local Board of Health Charter - LJ : Let's talk about the charter first, Chuck, how we came about drafting a charter because of the legislation (to reorganize health boards into districts). **CZ** : My understanding is, the BOCC had it on the agenda to approve a charter. Did they assign people to positions 5,6 and 7? **JD** : We appointed Lionel Orr Jr. as the consumer of public

health. **CZ** : On Monday it shows you made appointments. We've created staggered positions so you don't have all new members. (*The BOCC represents members 1, 2 and 3.*) What we did is what we did in Chelan-Douglas counties (*for which he is the health board's attorney*). Your charter is shorter, and complies with the law. **JD** : Lionel Orr is a tribal member. **CB** : He's not appointed by the Tribes. **CZ** : He doesn't count as the tribal member. It would be nice to have a person identified. **LJ** : We'll reach out (*to the Tribes*). *CZ recommends that members take an oath of office promising to abide by the law. This can be a form to fill out, and will cover the board « when you get adverse with someone ».*

CZ : One thing the Legislature did—you had a board with some non-elected board members. Now the statute says they're not allowed to vote on rate-setting, which is to be determined by a majority of elected officials. You have individuals contracted to work with you. The Legislature says we want their voice but not setting rates too low. Usually rates are set not to lose money. We have four elected officials. **CB** : New every board has equal appointees to elected officials. Who's the tie-breaker ? **CZ** : It takes three votes to make a fee schedule. The vote must be three to one.

LJ : Once we get a board, hopefully by our August meeting, there's a Local Board of Health Orientation in Spokane. August 31st and September 1st. I hope you all can attend, especially with the new legislation. **AH** : Are appointments all for four years or are they staggered ? **LJ** : Staggered. ...**CZ** : Positions four and five have terms that end Dec. 31st 2023, four-year terms. Six and seven end 2025 You can re-appoint as many times as you want.

Covid - **LJ** : The rate is 347 per 100,000, higher than when we were going into Stampede last year. That's just what's reported. Through Care Connect it takes 30 seconds to fill out a report. You can get people in touch with services like rent payments and care. We're seeing trends. One of the first symptoms of BA5 is dizziness. Usually it's aches and fever. We're going to start to see more hospitalisations. (*A hospital employee*) : We're re-opening the Covid unit. **LJ** : They've been part of that cascade for two years. Add wildfires—They're at wits' end with staffing shortages, people burnt out. They need to be recognized. We're trying to obtain more testing. There are going to be more variants. Continuing to work hard, trying to find some help. **MWW** : Are you fully staffed ? **LJ** : No.

Environmental Health Report - **MC** : Land use is way down because of WRIA 48 and 49 water restrictions. With the food mandate, not many closures, just turnovers. The FDA Food Standardization Programs require us to be consistent with other counties. There have been inconsistencies in programs. It's going to be beneficial.

AH (talking about an update from Planning and Public Works about how the ordinary water mark is determined by the Health Department) : There's no issuance of permits without site analysis. **MC** : There's no « bite » for compliance. The sewage issue is a health issue. **AH** : — on new construction. We had a permit issued through Public Health on a system where building required a septic approval. They required a variance... The Hearings Examiner approved... so that gave the go ahead to do permits. If a house was built in 1915, you have to issue a variance. (**Unknown**) : What about vacant lots for RVs ? **AH** : You say «No, you need a site analysis. » (**Unknown**) : If they're already there ? **AH** : It's illegal. **MC** : We have laws but to get compliance you need an ordinance. **AH** : It would take having a meeting all together for (*studying*) an infraction of civil code. **CB** : It's easier to deal with it as an infraction on that setback stuff. Enforcement is lacking in the county 'cause it's based on complaints. I'm used to having a building official who'll look at it if there's a setback. A lot of scenarios. You re-instated that meeting. **MC** : It's a matter of getting the Dept. of Health on board. **CB** : Staff work together better than elected officials. *CB mentions RVs at Conconully where they refused*

to connect to the septic system. **AH** I'm tired of getting hammered on when (*they are refused a building permit*) after being issued a septic permit. **MC** : There's a lot of confusion about water adequacy. **AH** : There needs to be direction given on this matter.

JD : Margaret Johnson's place south of Okanogan—we said « After three times you'll get an eviction order. Deputies don't want to make someone go to jail. **CB** : Create a process that includes the county. They're better equipped for the legal process... Start with compliance. Get a site analysis before a visit. Create a civil infraction at the county level. They get fined, get liens on their legal property. It's going to have first priority. Until you have county regulation in place, there's not much the health district can do. They're ill-equipped to prosecute. The County *is* set up that way. Get everyone together, start with that premise. The high water mark, shorelines... are defined by Planning.

They mention a case where there were utilities on the shoreline, how there are several ways to determine the high water mark, how it takes time to do a site analysis. **AH** : I got a compliment about how quick things go through (*the permit system*).

JD : I've gotten the same compliment. **AH** : For permitting a septic system, don't see where the house is going to go... Once Public Health gives a septic permit, all of a sudden stuff gets vested, law suits—can't build based on (*inaudible*) regulations—a whole thing gets set in motion. ... **CB** : The biggest frustration (is) watching development occur, septic and well, then no building. So site analysis is key to everything. **MC** : I get so tired of writing letters and three years later it's the same situation. **CB** : We have consolidated development (*inaudible*) that address the same issue. Right now you can make sure there's a site analysis. Don't even know what our (position) is on RVs as a home. Three bedrooms, that burns really fast. **AH** : Tempered with the fact housing is so expensive. **MC** : I'm getting tired of getting guns pulled on me and no recourse. **CB** : We had a building official (to whom) somebody said, « You got a body bag ? 'Cause I don't have one. » **MC** : Sometimes it's an even bigger issue. Lot of riff raff because there's not a lot of enforcement. **CB** : With law enforcement I've seen (*it work well with*) « You help us, we'll help you. »

CB wonders if the prosecutor has the staff to deal with the outcomes of the site analysis requirement. AH rues the case lost when the Hearings Examiner ruled in favor of building on a parcel based on septic approval. **CB** : Site analysis is the cheap component. **CZ** : People came to me because they thought water adequacy was a legal issue. The Dept. of Ecology issues a notice of intent. **JD** : I'm encouraged you guys are finding solutions... You're on the right track. **LJ** : This is a great opportunity to do just that. **CB** : When Planning reviewed plats they didn't pay attention to where the utilities were...

Meeting adjourned at 3 :08