

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, July 27th, 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

Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk

(Via Zoom) Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2

(Via Zoom) Nancy Farr (NF), Fire Adapted Methow Valley (FAMV)

(Via Zoom) Isabelle Spohn (IS), County Watch, former member Methow Valley Citizens Council

(Via Zoom) Chris Furr (CF), District Ranger, Methow

(Via Zoom) Matt Castle (MC), Forest Fire Management Officer

Tony Hawley (TH), Okanogan County Sheriff

Mike Warden (MW), Communications Deputy, Sheriff's Office

Kristin Bail (KB), Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Supervisor

Naomi Peasley, Events Coordinator, Fairgrounds

(Via Zoom) Sarah Lane (SL), Methow Watershed Foundation

(Via Zoom) Alyssa Jumars, Methow Watershed Foundation

(Via Zoom) Craig McDonald, Methow Watershed Foundation

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. At time of compiling these notes, no video of this meeting had been published.

Summary of Important Discussions: *Citizens criticize by-passing of public participation in elaboration of fire protection plan and ask BOCC to clarify priorities; Forest Service will not close forest but will do messaging to decrease fire risk, Sheriff says some lake activities curbed so planes can fill up; Nespelem bans industrial activities in forest; CB outlines possible priorities to seek funding for; Methow Watershed Foundation faces bureaucratic hurdles before being able to receive public funds.*

1:38 p.m. - *In Public Comment Period, NF reports that their comments are not relevant for hazard mitigation, that, given the urgency (of the fire situation), Emergency Manager Maurice Goodhall will submit a plan for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funding and that public comments will be considered when the plan is updated.* IS: ...While we were busy with the fires, we were left out of the process. The only comment seen on the Facebook site was a response to a 700-page document. It's understandable people are angry and upset... The underlying problem is the county dragging its heels on fire protection. (It has) decided to focus on other things, in spite of a court case, and now must act quickly to get FEMA (funds)... *She mentions the 2013 Critical Areas Ordinance:* They haven't had time to look at the document (*and*) incorporate the county into a fire protection plan... CB: I wish it were that simple. Critical areas was approved of by the public but not by the BOCC. With (*public process and law suit*) deadlines we were late... just about to finish the last phase of a new one. We didn't have the update done to address endangered species habitat. We still have a court case, still live with unfinished documents. It's not totally a lack of priorities for the commissioners. If we finish the mitigation plan, I'd get through the species habitat plan.

We're doing our darndest to get that done. *IS feels there's a pattern:* The previous planner knew of the July deadline, did other things, went on vacation. We'd like you to discuss priorities at a public meeting. CB: It's nice to now what people are thinking... Looking at procedure (*for the mitigation plan*)...FEMA has 45 days to look at (*it*). Looking for an opportunity for comment. *IS reminds him of the legal notice published for "55 Harris RD" which was in fact Lost River but the Citizens Council missed it because no mention was made of the Methow and the location couldn't be located through the assessor's website.*

2:00 - Forest Service, wildfire precautions - KB: ...We have to be thoughtful (about closure of forest, overnight visits). We have 3.9 million acres of forest... We're at a precaution level three, and the highest level (*five*) as far as resources availability. Nationally the concern is about certain areas at risk rather than forest-wide closure... CF: Two large areas are closed—Cub Creek and Bear Creek. *AH says, in the Methow:* As soon as you get off the valley floor you're on Forest Service land. *KB is concerned about areas with high ingress and egress. JD says the DNR, Fire Chiefs, Forest Service and Commissioners need to come to a decision together.* TH: They're going to deal with the Winthrop fires, keeping people away from fire fighting efforts, planes dipping into Pearrygin Lake, there have been a couple of issues already. *He says he went to Lost Lake where he found no "concerning behavior" linked to the campfire ban. JD says the Red Apple Fire in Wenatchee was caused by a kind of ammunition used in target practice. AH is worried about places like the Twisp River with only one access road, and also the use of ATVs on Forest Service roads. Says on the west side of the mountains there is less risk but here, "a lot of people not recreating at all." MC urges being proactive. MW reports that communications installations on McClure are surrounded by gravel and that weeds have been cut.* KB: We won't be anticipating any easing of fire controls... (We) have welcomed any additional messaging, outreach. Part time visitors don't necessarily live in (*wildfire areas*). (2:25) - MC: In Eastern Washington we have weekly interagency calls to set (fire precaution) levels...In Nespelem they are going to level four which affects all industrial activity in the woods. Compared to past years we haven't reached this point so quickly... All over we're having the same discussions. CB: Emergency Management is a good resource. We have a Public Hearing, so we have to close.

2:31 - Hearing on budget supplemental for Fairgrounds - NP: The Fair's rabbit barn reached out for help to get new cages. Confluence Health donated \$1,000 for that item. (2:43) *LJ presents resolution 91-2021, backed by the HR department, reclassifying the position of Fairgrounds Events Coordinator. Resolution passed.*

2:51 - *CB asks to add his Power Point presentation on funding to the agenda. LJ schedules it for Monday at 2:30.* CB: Economic Alliance was asking about ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. I'd told Chris Johnson (*we need*) a prioritization process. Not everyone knows, and sends to different agencies. For example, Westlake water system is substandard, and Okanogan needs to extend water and sewer to the sports complex. We could interest the Tribes for Rodeo Trail properties...Water to the Fairgrounds would solve a lot of problems. *Says there is anxiety getting people appointed on the WRIA 49 Watershed Committee.* AH: We need to prioritize. CB: Do you want to start? (*inaudible*) CB: The strategic plan can include critical areas, can also say "we don't know yet." It can include an update to tribal policy.

3:00 - Discussion on funding with Methow Watershed Foundation members -SL: One of the questions you asked was you're curious about other watershed councils. There's (Chehalis?) and Skagit. They get funding from the counties. The CRM (Coordinated Resource Management) process is being discussed. Skagit is having quarterly meetings with stakeholders. CB: I was looking at the way it was organized, if there was a physical agent that identified as lead agency where money gets processed and bills get paid. In the Methow it's the Watershed Foundation. *They discuss public process, AH stresses need to get quotes when using public funds, CB says that concerns sums over \$2,500, but they can set their own guidelines,* (3:15) AJ: Are you putting

proposals to different groups to do watershed work? *CB mentions personal services contracts, says there's no requirement which process to use, RFQ (Request For Qualifications) or RFP (Request For Proposal), but they could budget on a long term basis. AH, JD and CB agree to use RFP process and to work on a framework, and then notify the Foundation.*

3:19 - CB: Long Term Recovery says all lumber is out of the (*fairgrounds*) sheep barn as of Wednesday. JD: I see they've finished those pipes.

3:21 - LJ asks if the BOCC will meet Wednesday– they will not. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting adjourned.