

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday September 21, 2021 AM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC Chair, District 1

Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2

Jim DeTro (JD) – BOCC, District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ) – Clerk of the Board

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer via Zoom. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. 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:

https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php.

Time stamps below are in real time. To locate specific topics, a clock on the AV Capture video screen at <https://okanogancounty.org/avcapture.html> can assist in finding the correct spot on the video recording.

Summary of Significant Discussions or Actions: More discussion regarding specifics of funding purchase of Forest Service building for Superior Court and upcoming jury trial/selection to begin in November, Finance Committee Meeting, Planning updates, Comp Plan timeline and fee schedule, County agreement with City of Conconully, Hearing continued for Methow Valley Irrigation District Franchise renewal, Public Works updates, Ellesford Transfer Station, road conditions after fires, 2 open positions in the Methow, Discussion among the BOCC regarding Mask and vaccine mandates overall and in regard to County Employees.

8:15 CB and JD (AH not in attendance at this time) discuss with Dennis Rabidou (DR), Juvenile and Court Administrator upcoming jury trial, will be utilizing the Commissioners Hearing Room. Jury Selection begins in November. BOCC will meet in other room – Public will need to join by Zoom during this time. Discussion of Forest Service Building purchase. DR – When will we have access to facility to make sure power and water are working?

DR would like to change an employee in Administrative Services to part time – has already spoken with HR. Moved, seconded, and carried to approve.

8:40 AH arrives. BOCC begins talking about using funds in Capital Facilities budget and ARPA funds to purchase Forest Service building. This would decrease the amount to send out to Bond.

(Zoom audio was turned off from 8:48 to 8:48)

AH suggests drafting a letter to Commerce Dept regarding money that wasn't spent. (ARPA or CARES\$\$, I presume) Public Health owes us back some money. LJ and AH have been asking for receipts from Public Health. They have until Nov 15th. We should just be able to use the funds to pay for wages.

9:00 Pete Palmer (PP), Planning Director - Provides the current Comprehensive Plan timeline and updated fee schedule. PP has compared with other comparable counties' fee schedule.

Some discussion of permit application after the fact. CB suggested an investigation fee like some of the Cities do.

9:10 AH we're going to need to work on zoning also. People don't necessarily want to buy in a planned development. BOCC has final say on subdivisions within planned developments.

9:19 PP states that Hearings Examiner is buffer between planning dept and court

9:23 – PP states that Planning is having a hard time changing their mindset. Needs to not use laws to stop development. AH states that law is the governing body.

9:27 Moved, seconded, and carried to approve the interlocal agreement with City of Conconully (119-2021). City will do own site analysis, but Bldg dept will perform inspections and permitting. CB – Conconully City Council will handle their own variances.

Planning Association Conference is November 15th.

Comp Plan timeline: Sept 27th – Comp Plan draft, October 11th – Comp Plan draft back to Planning, October 18th – Comp Plan to Planning workshop, then 11/22 is Public Hearing, By 12/29 BOCC has meeting to approve document.

AH reminds the need for @9AM and plan for all day. AH also suggests putting time schedule on Planning Website.

9:30 Moved, seconded, and carried to approve resolution approving the BOCC Chair to sign contracts for fair, and moved, seconded, and carried to approve vouchers in the amount of \$1,459 for the Fair contracts.

9:50 discussing a piece of property to sell in the Methow.

10:00 – Finance committee: Cari Hall(CH) – Auditor and Leah McCormack(LM), Treasurer CH states that we need to pass a preliminary Budget Our budget is balanced in the draft form this year. Public Health is included. JD-Can we adopt the draft? AH – no, not yet. JD states that it is a godsend what you guys are doing.

AH tells LM that she can take off her mask because she is using the microphone.

Continued budgeting discussion.

10:22 – AH states that we could purchase the FS building with ARPA funding and Capital Facilities monies. There is a new 4Million dollars in ARPA funding. Building is 15,000 square feet. 67% of the building will be utilized by Superior Court. & there will be some revenue from renting to people that are in there now. Discussion of bonding the improvements needed on the building. Beeman (consultant) gives an 11 million \$\$ figure for improvements. AH states that we do not want to bond out for 30 years. LM suggests bundling of other funds. Are there any other funds that could be utilized?

AH states that this is a brainstorming session. AH states that he is unwilling to put county in a bad position for future needs.

10:45 LM states other departments to speak up for their needs, maybe move out of courthouse into the administrative building.

11:00 public hearing on the Utility Franchise Renewal of the Methow Valley Irrigation District, Jo Stansbury from Public Works explains.

Diane Thurlow, who lives on the Lower Beaver Creek road is the public testimony. She is concerned that the MV Irrigation district has no jurisdiction over her area. She cites the history of previous ditch that was abandoned.

Josh Thomson explains that this franchise hearing is just about using the ROW/County Road – not the actual water situation. AH states it is about granting MVID the ability to work on the county road.

AH proposes that we leave public comment open and continue hearing until 10/26 @11:00. Public Works will re-advertise.

11:21 – Ken Kovalchenko (KK), Solid Waste Manager and Josh Thomson (JT) County Engineer give updates.

KK state solid waste has been reverified by the EPA with one issue. Also, Ellesford transfer station needs help. This is the 2nd busiest transfer station in the county.

11:39 JT updates maintenance and road conditions after the fires. Has met with DNR and FS. They feel it is the County's obligation.

11:45 There are 2 open positions in Public Works in the Methow Valley. Difficult finding someone to fill the positions. AH discusses the expensive housing in the Methow as one difficulty. Also, apparently, there is a person that works for the State that might be

willing to take a wage cut and begin working for the County (*this apparently, has to do with not being willing to take a vaccine*)

11:50

This starts the discussion on vaccine and mask mandates because JT and KK have asked whether there will be some mandates for their employees.

Per JD and AH – they will never approve a mandate for vaccines or masks. CB states we are going to need to start a discussion.

Lots of discussion among the BOCC regarding their opinions of the COVID protocols, etc. AH we don't have a policy (*not sure if he said they will or won't follow mandates*)

AH states he is not negative on vaccines. He had Covid.

11:52 – JD “as long as 200,000 people come across the border, adding and contributing to the spike, will not approve of mandates”

CB states County will probably not adopt a policy now.

11:56 CB talks about discussion they had yesterday.

Another quote of JD “whatever that thing is, they can make stuff up” *not sure exactly what this was in relation to, but possibly Covid statistics*

CB states there are a few staff that don't feel comfortable about other staff not wearing masks. AH – we represent a lot of different mind sets. JD to each his own, AH – there is a lot of information/opinions on all sides.

CB relays a story of a husband and wife who differ on wearing masks.

AH – a mask keeps you from blowing things out. This is not something is going to go away.

No decision was made and they closed their morning session at 12:08