

Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting September 27, 2021 AM session

CB—Chris Branch, BOCC chair, District 1
AH – Andy Hover, BOCC vice-chair, District 2
JD – Jim DeTro, BOCC member, District 3
LJ—Lalena Johns- Clerk to the Commissioners
CH – Cari Hall - County Auditor
TE - Thomas Evan – Veterans Relief Board
LD - Lael Duncan- Okanogan Community Action Council
CN – Craig Nelson – Okanogan Conservation District

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note takers comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://www.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://www.okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php

The time stamps refer to the times on the AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date. Click [here](#) to go to video.

Summary of significant discussion: Discussion and approval of Purchase and Sale Agreement for Okanogan County to purchase old Forest Service building that is next to the Public Works offices; Auditor request for changes to leave for employees affected by office closures due to Covid19; Veteran Relief Board update and request to change from a Board to a committee; Discussion about budget for Homeless Housing fund and Affordable Housing fund; Discussion with Okanogan Conservation District about implementing a water bank for Aq lands.

Meeting opens with pledge of allegiance.

02:30 – LJ mentions that she has a Purchase and Sale agreement from “Sylvia”. Discussion about the earnest money amount. (*notetaker assumes this is for the county’s purchase of the Forest Service Building that will be used for the Superior Court.* JD arrives, AH suggests that they go through the discussion slowly now that everyone is here.

06:10 – AH asks for Executive Session for review of performance of a public employee. Motion made and approved. BOCC goes into Executive Session for about 10 minutes.

17:36 – JD says that he got a call and heard that PILT will be fully funded at the old rate. SRS got an increase over a 3 year period. They will be able to do some changes to Title 1, 2, 3 that will allow more flexible use of funds.

19:15 – Discussion of the Purchase and Sale agreement for the county’s purchase of the Forest Service Building that will be used for the Superior Court. Purchase price is \$1.625M, including \$50K earnest money. Possible closing by Oct 20th. BOCC engages in a fairly involved discussion about the details of closing dates and other items.

1:19:05 – Auditor Cari Hall asks for BOCC to approve change to protocol to allow county employees to use administrative leave rather than sick leave to cover days they were not working due to office closure. (The Auditor’s office was closed for a period of time in early September due to a Covid outbreak.) All Auditor dept. employees were not able to work during this period (and the quarantine period that followed) and some of them felt that they should not have to use their sick leave to cover that time since it was no fault of their own. CH clarifies that she is requesting Admin. Leave ONLY for employees who tested negative for Covid19. Those who tested positive have other avenues such as L&I to cover their time off. Question was asked if this is a countywide policy, AH answers that it is a case by case basis, CB agrees.

1:25:20 – BOCC returns to the Purchase and sale agreement discussion. Motion is made and seconded to approve the Purchase of the Forest Service building. BOCC members comment that this is an important moment in the effort to improve the court system and also the juvenile justice system.

1:28:10 – Veterans Relief Board gives update. Thomas Evan and two others are present (*not introduced- names unknown.*) TE reports that a new computer system is being developed for on-line applications. Reports that \$582K is coming into the county through the VA. 45 veterans served in the last time period. Mentions that many Vets need help with transport to Wenatchee for medical appointments. Asks if the DAV van will be back in service soon. AH asks about the Apple Line bus. Asks if there were a regularly scheduled bus would it be helpful? Suggests that maybe Trango could work on getting people to Pateros from Mazama and other parts of the county so they could transfer to the Apple Line bus. States that people pay taxes for the bus system and it should serve the public as best it can. JD asks about veterans who have had benefits cut back due to the “current administration”. TE says that is part of the normal process when reassessment is done. Emphasizes that it is not due to any particular administration. The VA reps explain the process in detail to the BOCC. TE moves on to discussion about the Veterans Relief Board and states that the board doesn’t really exist as it used to. So much is done on line now, that it is hard to get enough people to fill the board positions. The board is required to have a quorum which is difficult any more. Suggests that the structure be changed to be a committee, rather than a board. Bylaws would stay the same. Short discussion about the logistics of making this change. AH requests that it be made clear that this request came from the Veterans Relief Board and not the BOCC. Discussion moves to how to accurately measure the success of the program. i.e. how many veterans did we help in a given period of time? What era of Vet are we serving? Currently 78% are Vietnam vets, 18% Gulf War and remainder are WWII and other. AH asks if the younger vets are more pro-active about getting help for themselves? Answer is yes. The discharge process for a military member includes a lot more training, and younger vets are proficient with computers and electronic processes.

2:02:20 – Discussion regarding Homeless Housing and Affordable Housing funding. Lael Duncan reviews their process for identifying funding needs. Discussion about the details of funds for both affordable housing fund, and homeless housing fund. Review of historical funding with a goal of identifying 2022 funding needs so that budget can be accurate.

2:31:30 – Craig Nelson from Okanogan Conservation District updates BOCC on water banking efforts. Reports that there is a “hiccup” with the WA State Conservation Commission regarding who will control the Ag water bank. Okanogan Conservation District does not approve of this approach. OCD is moving forward with efforts to create the Ag water bank. There is a property

owner in the Methow Valley who wants to put their water in such a bank, but is not willing to wait forever. There is a need to move this along to get started. Discussion about the new water bank and what water uses it will serve. General conversation about development and how to manage it in regards to water. AH says that he had an interesting question from a constituent about whether a person who had a share of an irrigation district could decide to forego that and instead purchase a water right from the water bank. Discussion ensues about how to handle that.

2:50:15 – BOCC adjourns for the day.