

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

August 31st, 2020

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Present:

Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1
Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Pamela Stevens Perez (PSP), Veterans' Services Agent (by Zoom)
Dale White (DW), Veterans Administration Executive Board Chairman (by Zoom)
Carey Hall (CH), County Auditor
Arian Noma (AN), County Prosecutor
Roni Holder Diefenbach (RHD), Economic Alliance Director

(Time stamps refer to the AV Capture recording, available on the County Watch website.)

Summary - 9/28/2020, 9 AM

Housing (1:03:29) - The County has started receiving RFPs (Request For Proposals) as the Oroville Housing Authority awaits federal funding for its housing shelter project.

Water (1:20:16) - A short discussion attempting to interpret state code concerning well-drilling permit exemptions as regarding domestic and outdoor use.

Veterans (1:33:49) - Housing assistance to veterans affected by the fire available through Community action; modifications at the Legacy site necessary to accommodate tele-health consultations; adapting rules for membership on the V.A. Board; limits on relief money

Arson Trial (1:58:36) - Experts need to be flown in to testify at an arson trial scheduled for December.

Central Landfill (2:17:28) - Which county should foot the bill for Bridgeport's use of the Central Landfill while waiting for reimbursement from federal emergency funding?

Economic Alliance Spending (2:29:32) - \$507,000 distributed so far to 56 businesses, economic relief process to continue thanks to new CARES money, County allocations of CARES funds and an extended deadline for aid applications to Nov 31st.

Broadband access (2:46:21) - Economic Alliance facilitating grant requests for the development of 18 broadband sites for the County and the Tribes.

Power Lines (2:56:40) - The P.U.D. is putting up 800 new poles and putting some lines underground.

:03:29 **Housing shelter project** - \$20,882 has been received from the Dept. of Commerce through the Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales Tax which will be allocated in the 2021 budget and administered through Community Action. On Monday, Oct. 19th at 2:30 p.m. the Housing Study results will be presented. LJ says good progress is being made on the Oroville Housing Authority Project as they comply with the many requirements for receiving federal funds for the housing shelter. Responses from architects have been received.

- :20:16 **Water use, RCW 9094-020** - AH thinks the permit exemptions should have included outdoor irrigation. He discusses with CB how to interpret State planning code which gives permit exemptions to domestic use and outdoor watering up to on half acre. He would like to make sure land already irrigated will not lose that right because of rural or intensified development. CB says they don't want the county to over-compensate for domestic use.
- :33:49 **Covid Relief Funds for Veterans** - Veterans Services Agent Pamela Pamela Stevens Perez (PSP) says the V.A. has a good working relationship with Community Action and will refer veterans in need of assistance and housing to them since the commissioners inform her that they have Covid funds at their disposal. Dale White (DW), Veterans Administration Executive Board Chairman, mentions veterans affected by the fires and suggests that part of these funds be earmarked for veterans. PSP is concerned about those whose discharge forms were destroyed by fire. She has helped them get assistance and will vouch for their honorable discharge status. (1:41:56) AH asks about tele-health installations. A separate section of the Legacy building in Tonasket needs to be set up to insure privacy between doctor and patient. Could a mobile unit be installed? There are already 50-amp power hook-ups on the site. CB supposes that if an addition were made to the building it could serve other purposes as well. (1:43:00) DW states the need for the local V.A. to change its bylaws to 1) use conference calls with an established quorum to conduct business and 2) create an "at large" position on the V.A. board since it is now restricted to one member from each service group, these groups are dwindling in number, and the Omak American Legion has a second member, Eric (Fritts?), who would like to be on the board. Also, can someone donate money directly to the board? DW would like to contribute money to buy scanners. Auditor Carey Hall says yes, by establishing a revenues line specific to donations and specifying that donation in a budget supplement for auditing purposes. (1:56:54) DW encourages veterans asking for fire assistance to not be deterred by the \$500/year limits, as exceptions can be approved in executive council.
- :58:36 **Arson trial** - County Prosecutor Arian Noma reports that experts need to be flown in to testify at an arson trial scheduled for December. Additional money for this expense and the cost of the investigation was approved by the Commissioners.
- :13:47 **Mill Fire** - JD says FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) has called the sawmill fire a wind event. CB suggests that in that case some FEMA relief money may be available. AH remarks that the Dept. of Energy is stalling clean-up of that site in order to check for lead-based paint and asbestos, and if more inspectors can't come, a letter should be sent to FEMA asking for funds to hire more.
- :17:28 **Central Landfill use due to fire** - CB suggests meeting with Douglas County Commissioners to ask them to pay for Bridgeport's use of the landfill. If these costs are eligible for FEMA reimbursement it may be the individual counties who are refunded, in which case each county should pay for its own customers even though the landfill covers both counties.
- :29:32 **Economic Alliance funding and spending** - Roni Holder Diefenbach (RHD), Economic Alliance Director, announces that County and State CARES money totaling 507,000 has been awarded to 56 businesses and with the CARES money just released to the county, 39 more businesses will be assisted. She says some owners were concerned that other businesses were more in need than they were. Applicants had to provide Labor and Industry registration, business license and receipts. Calls continue to come in from those who didn't get the aid information right away, many of whom have formerly successful businesses which will go under because of Covid if their debts are not forgiven. Some received 8-12 week emergency loans and reimbursable grants for utilities but are still in difficulty. AH says it is important to provide necessary funds for businesses. The Alliance has been granted an extension for turning in applications, from Oct. 31st to Nov. 31st. It will need

another \$200,000 to fill anticipated demands. There may be an audit, in which case the Alliance will need to fund more staff. LJ says there should be money available but that they will need to vote an amendment to redirect available CARES money.

1:46:21 **Broadband access** - The Economic Alliance, with help from consultants and on behalf of the County and Tribes, will ask the EDA (Economic Development Administration) for \$200,000 to develop access to broadband at 18 locations. It has met with the State Broadband Director to prioritize projects, several of which are “shovel ready.” RDH will be submitting a request for a letter of support from the Board of Commissioners to help with the grant request. She says a meeting to discuss broadband access is scheduled for that afternoon at 2:00. She also reports that Pateros has used assistance money to set up “pop-ups”-- food vendors with their own trailers, bands, a pump station, possibly other vendors, to encourage people to come into the community to shop. The application deadline to the EDA for this initiative is Oct. 26th.

1:56:40 **Power lines** - The Bonneville Power Administration is putting up some 800 power line poles. JD says, given the 50-year life span of a pole, now is an excellent opportunity to “go underground.” Already underground is the line from the substation to Jackass Butte, and the P.U.D. assures him they’re doing that wherever possible. CB says that will prevent incidents with the wildlife.

1:58:40 Meeting Adjourned