

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners  
July 28, 2020 AM Session**

**Present:**

Jim DeTro (JD) - BOCC Chair, District 3

Chris Branch (CB) - District 2

Andy Hover (AH) - District 3

Lalena Johns (LJ) - Clerk of the Board

Ted Murray (TM) - GIS, Recreational trails

Pete Palmer - (PP) Planning Director

Tanya Craig - Human Resources, Risk Management

Larry Gilman - Assessor

Josh Thomson (JT) - Public Works

Members of the public on Zoom: Lorah Super, Jasmine Minbashian, Isabelle Spohn, Ruth Hall

**Note:** These notes have been summarized, paraphrased, or taken verbatim by volunteers for Okanogan County Watch and posted at [countywatch.org](http://countywatch.org). Every effort is made to be as accurate as possible. For official county minutes, normally published at a later time, see <https://okanogancounty.org/Commissioners/Minutes%202020/2020%20Minutespage.html>.

**Summary:** *Planning Update: Similkameen Trail maintenance, expansion, grants. Agencies want to help, but there is no plan. Branch advocates for plan. Methow/Tonasket USFS Districts: Palmer to draft letter re amendment to USFS plans in regards to deer cover level and allowing treatment by non-scheduled timber harvest, burning, etc. Ludwig/Jolley Short Plats - Legal procedures, representation. Tanya Craig: housing inmates. Assessor report & request, Public Works & EMS reports.*

**9:00 - LJ - Change in Agenda.** 2:00 - prosecutor to meet with board about something really important.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**STAFF REPORTS**

**Planning Update: Similkameen Trail: maintenance, expansion, grants, need for plan.**

PETE PALMER - SIMILKAMEEN PORTION OF PNW TRAIL: Noxious weeds, campers from outside the area, use of LTAC funds; continuation of trail beyond Nighthawk, Branch pushes for better long-term plan; agencies have invested & want to help but there is no plan.

PP: (*Hard to hear*) I have here with me..... wants to talk about the trail at Enloe. Brings up issues we brought up with the trail. There was a big (?) camp out there, also needed to clean up after campers. Now the ?? are moving in - it's bringing out other issues having to do with maintenance things along the side we control - starting to be a lot of noxious weeds...not just that trail. Need to figure out how to cover the cost for some of these issues, mainly disposal and also how to maintain these trails.

AH - We need to ID how many people from out of the area ....

LJ - What is the rule - from 50 miles or more, right? Yes.

AH (?) If we could put up a kiosk to figure out how many are using the trail from out of the area, we can use lodging tax for that. A county-owned system like in the Methow. Can use the LTAC funds for that.

LJ - Also for maintenance.

AH - A lot of people from outside of the Methow come in and stay.

TM- Compile a list. Also BLM has a counter on both trails. With the Covid stuff, surprising how many people --80 people?

CB - It's been that way for a long time.

AH - Many people from Canada?

TM - Also from Seattle and other areas. Are borders open?

AH - I meant in normal times.

TM - There are posters up near what used to be state park, and people use both trails.

CB - Visitor's center directs people

TM - Similkameen trail - people use regularly for exercise. There are snakes and stuff. One person said something about a guy with a machete - people were afraid to go there. I noticed the deputy. (?) bags of knapweek were picked up. BLM trail crews. Part of our partnership.

AH - How about the tunnel?

TM - In sight of the dam. We have a gauge there. Brings us to something else. Do we want to continue "this thing?"

C B - My answer is yes.

TM - 12 miles to Nighthawk? Do we want to continue beyond where it is now?

**What to do about reluctant landowners:**

CB - By nature, Ted knows this - during development, same with the Methow trail, it doesn't happen overnight. If there is resistance, it eventually changes. In the long term - I'm thinking in very long term - I think it should be an objective of the county.

V - Both Diane, BLM, and Justin (*WDFW*) asked if we wanted to T-off and add to the trail. Not sure if they want to - the elders there - there might be a way to bring trucks down - others would like to see it done. Most of the land is owned by WDFW and BLM. Where there is a will, there is away. Is there a will?

AH - I'm not for pushing a trail through if the landowners are not willing.

JD - They might change their tune if they get a conservation easement.

AH - So much fun. I'm willing to pursue ....

JD - Maybe ??? I can quiz the Barnes and others.

**AGENCIES WANT TO HELP, BUT THERE IS NO PLAN**

TM - I'm in touch with BLM, land trust, BMT (?), WDFW - seems like we could all share in this...Right now it's thistle? land. Whilst trailhead needs to be mowed to....One of the problems with Whistler Canyon trailhead - the orchard - beautiful orchard, just about every year someone calls.

AH - Let's ask Josh if he can put together a budget for us. Ted, put a list together as to what needs to be done.

CB - Adding to that, we have problems that emerged and we discussed: We need a better plan and strategy...it needs long-term commitment. That's not just addressing issues as they pop up. Lee Chapman has been calling me - the town put in \$\$\$. They are asking now - we want to go and do work, want to coordinate with the county.

Ted - Needs a restroom. \$\$\$ was committed

CB - The \$\$\$ went away because there was no commitment. It's joint between city, county, others. If they see no commitment from the county - ie an overall plan. If the landowners don't want to do that, just keep it there and something eventually comes around to change it. You need a plan in place to go forward if it is going to move ahead.

JD - The tunnel is a problem.

TED - WDFW can do these things without any kind of matching funds. Maybe BLM too. RCO says they pretty much give us a grant.

CB - They have invested a lot, and once they make the commitment, they like to continue.

TED - With the fires, etc - that's why they want to help us. We haven't been in position to do anything. USFS - those folks are always putting up grants to open up trails in the forest. That's another thing - the county .....this Tonasket Ranger Dist.... I asked them send their plans...the Methow Valley's RD is as long as our arms. The Tonasket RD has only 2 projects. I asked Betsy up there (*likely Elizabeth Peterson in Tonasket*), something about a project in Republic....campground completely re-done. Beautiful docks, swimming and fishing, etc. He asked why such a difference?/ She said something about not putting timber up for sale.....We ran a whole survey there. Last one was intensive - I wanted something to show.

JD - Oct 1, Tonasket RD will be in Colville NF. Travis is the ranger at Republic, Rodney S. Is the supervisor. Both are good to work with.

TED - They send up heavy equipment, they don't.... I suppose their timber revenue is going down.

JD - The whole Okanogan /Wenatchee NF has only 2 people in their roads crew now.

TED - Only people who do maintenance are BCH (*Backcountry Horsemen*) and the ATV clubs.

AH - "Over there" (Methow Dist??) they have the trails collaborative.

TED - BCH says they need better roads to get back into forests. Those roads are sick. We used to have beautiful roads going into the forest.

CB - Since you talked about the Colville having such success, do you think that will help?

Ted - Can't hurt. Would be nice if we could let the Forest Supervisor know what the conditions are.

CB - Not a big deal to let them know.

JD \_ I can talk with Rodney, I know him fairly well.

Ted - (*can't understand.* )

JD - You are exactly right. My hopes are up because of that transition to the Colville.

CB - This effort to complete Pacific NW trail....would we be interested in moving that Nat'l Scenic trail designation on up the system?

JD - That's why I said if we could get the land trust involved, maybe they .....would change their minds. (*Speaking apparently of landowners who are not interested.*) Also, the Dagnons.....

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TM - He says he wants to build the gate himself. But since then, I've only heard "no."

CB - Don? (*Dagnon*)

Ted - The Dad. He is still alive. I've never spoken to Don. Just heard from the Land Trust. Land Trust does conservation easements. Tried to get them to include some kind of passage in the document. They (Dagnons?) would't do it.

JD - If we don't ask and don't communicate, it will never happen.

CB - And if we do not express our interest in a long-term effort. That was the conversation 25 years ago, when the trail was first being.....

Ted - All these different agencies are interested in pursuing it.

CB - People in Oroville also are interested.

Ted - So ????

CB - that's my answer.

JD - I agree with Andy, if the landowners won't cooperate at all, it's hard.

AH -I want to tell them we are not pushing them. Ask them ...this trail was planned years ago. We are looking and need a plan.

CB - Question I have before that: There is a trail right now. Will we commit to continuing to maintain the trail, where the gate is now, and into the future.? Express the interest.

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AH - Not until I see the budgetary impacts.

CB - Everyone wants that....and if we don't have enough, how do we get it? We look for ways to continue. But we need to express that's what we are doing. So if RCO asks, we can say yes, we will continue to maintain this trail....

AH - So there are capital expenses, ongoing maintenance - the 2 things I need to see.

CB - Everyone understands that. You can't miraculously wave a wand - we need a strategy. If we see what we have and others have....

AH - Going on to things like the tunnel - 4 million dollars. Or you can go around it. Those are different costs, even in ballpark terms - where we can say if we really want to fix the tunnel.

Ted - Something about all these different groups. Where lies along the river will not be easy to maintain, etc. etc. washouts, bridges,

***TOO MUCH INTERFERENCE OVER ZOOM***

.....We worked our way up the trail - that part is buried in knapweed.

CB - Something about fire if driving through it.

TM - Bad on that side of the gate.

JD - Can control with herbicides.

TM- I called BLM; they were going to take a look.

JD \_ I eradicated some weeds in 3 years.

CB - RCO and everyone else needs to show something in our plans. The incentive is to address the issues with their trails. We have to express long-term interest and it has to be in a document.

JD How much time is left? 15 minutes.

?? Can you tell me where that gate is?

CB - Just the value of the salmon alone is a big deal.

AH - Are there fish above it?

CB (?) Yes, but not salmon.

AH - Was looking up there 2 years ago - how pretty it was. No one on the river doing anything.

JD - Activity up there on weekends. Several gold mining claims - guy who owns a business in Omak goes up there.

CB - Swimming, kayaking, swimming hole at the bend is very popular.

JD - there are fish guys - they fly-fish there.

CB - along the road that follows the ditch. They did a recreation study for the dam. Have all the usage issues....(*interrupted*)

AH - What is the big concrete structure? Near Barnes place. Looks like there was a fish rearing tank, just off the river

CB - Someone started taking water off the top of Osoyoos.

*(Conversation appears to end - no decisions or directions as to any long-term plans.)*

### **Methow/Tonasket USFS Districts: Amendment to Plans in re deer cover level and allowing treatment by non-scheduled timber harvest, burning, etc. Commissioner input?**

Pete -Proposal from Methow/Tonasket issue: Deer cover level - I want to be sure all is managed in the same manner. The USFS old growth plan - allowing treatment by non-scheduled timber harvest, burning, etc. etc. Wondering if you want to make a comment on that, if you want a letter drafted for or against it?

CB - Those amendments are important to support, especially in the LSR land.

AH - Do you have the language in amendment? (*The amendment is referred to by Pete at this time.*)

AH - Could you draft a letter for consideration, and we'll see how this changes??

Pete - I also included something that shows how our data base is changing - Gene has been working hard on this - it will help in the long run to go back to answers we have already given folks. We can put on a ## and put it on there - can refer to or do another sites analysis.

You guys asked about a succession plan for GIS program - I walked with Work Force...maybe get a technician trainee into department. Right now, Work Source would pay up to 100% for 6 weeks. 140 hours. But at end of training, they'd like us to hire the person. I could fitter out \$34,000 for a Level one employee.

AH - Ted, what is your timeline?

Ted - Probably ??(*over a year?*)

## **Ludwig/Jolley Short Plats - Legal Procedures/ Representation**

Pete - We have been working on the Ludwig and Jolley short plats. Wanting to hear about the risk pool, also about the CAO - the last time you were there, prior to going out - I haven't gotten anything back yet.

CB - Talk with Tanya Craig.....

CB *Too many voices to hear.*

? No one said they would represent us at the Admin level.

CB/AH - Something about an attorney. *Could not hear.*

We could do it (?) at admin phase and then decide whether to do it or not.

AH - Consistency of CAO and Shorelines - are you still working on it? It is the revised Draft of CAO, or just differences??

Pete - *can't hear.*

AH - We need to know what the differences are if we-do a draft on it. Have a land use attorney look at it, and then send to PC.

CB - We might.....(interrupted?)

Pete - Last thing before Exec Session - update - I had a productive call with Yakama Nation, 3 members of their staff. They will send bullet points of goals and objectives in the Comp Plan that was given to us in 2017. They are excited to put everything aside, get to the table, work cooperatively to get some common ground to benefit the county as a whole. Excited, very productive, much welcome. Waiting for Lorah to get some dates for a - meeting with MVCC. Want to come to the table and do that too.

CB - A good start . Staff people start working together - it makes things move along rather than just having elected officials.

**Exec Session- 15 min. Commissioners in executive session until 10:16**

## **Tanya Craig, Human Resources & Risk Management**

E Wenatchee attorney contacted TC about housing inmates, AH was also contacted by Mayor of East Wenatchee regarding housing inmates.

A meeting is suggested with E Wenatchee Mayor. They would like to buy a specified amount of beds for inmate housing.

CB – would like to know the bed rate in Douglas County. Chelan County daily bed rate is \$120, and they pay for 40 beds whether used or not.

TC – Shelly (?) and I have been working with Pete Palmer.

CB requested job description for position in Public Works.. Would like a copy

AH – Kudos to the Sheriff's Dept for covering City of Tonasket.

Comments on the “VERY IMPORTANT” meeting @2:00 today with the Prosecutor.

Sideline comment re: JD reading article about Hydroxychloroquin

### **Assessor Larry Gilman –**

Their office is doing okay with the COVID restrictions but do not get a mailing out regarding assessed value and developments. Hopes to get completed by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Just finished with the Tonasket assessments – trying to catch up.

JD comment “people are moving out of the city and they are coming”

Gilman discussed the difficulty in assessing vacant land, hard to tell what the future will bring, this is a seller's market. ¼ acre of land is different in Tonasket vs Methow Valley. They do not value off real estate listing.

Any concerns of the commissioners? None, other than a 30% increase.

***Gilman request:*** Would like better communication re: COVID cases. Where located. Would help make decisions on which area employees are being sent. To help protect employees. Everyone has different opinions.

CB – supports whatever precautions they are taking.

### **Public Works, Josh Thomson:**

Solid waste – DOE looking for other landfills.

AH commented: we are actually over-funded on ours.

Road maintenance on the Bench Creek side; loggers have been notified of the need to water the road more. . There is also some bridge work. Monse River Road maintained during harvest, but not after that.

Chip seal is finishing up - but having computer issues. Should be able to finish Twisp streets this week, maybe some next week.

**Budget:** There is a hearing next week on the Budget ( I believe). This month's revenue is late due to distributors having a 30 day grace period on the gas tax.

JD: complains about traffic on Greenacres Road due to the large pot farm. Would like to change speed limit to 35-40 MPH. will talk with sheriff about that. Currently is 50 MPH.

### **Emergency Management, Maurice Goodall**

Only road closure right now is Siwash Creek, due to fire.

Discussion of current fires: Oroville, Anglin Meadows, Siwash Creek, Green Road – JH Green Road, Naomi Peasley @ fairgrounds prepared to shelter displaced animals if needed. Red Cross is helping fire victims.

**Other discussion:** Tribe's Habitat Project on the Methow Trail System; this Thursday, lightening/wind storms are expected to be coming through.

**11:35 Adjourned** until 1:30, which will be public comment period.

Note: See separate County Watch notes and audio for 1:30 Comment Period.