

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

Tuesday, Jan 24, 2017, Afternoon

Present:

Jim DeTro (BOCC)

Chris Branch (BOCC)

Andy Hover (BOCC)

Dan Higby (Building Dept)_

Perry Huston (Planning/Administration)

Eric (?) Dale Whit, Michael Stuart (Veterans' Services)

First up: Building Department Report, Commissioners, Dan Higby, Perry Huston

- 2016 a relatively slow year for building permits in the county
- Inquiry aside from Chris Branch: how are permits handled on the Reservation
 - o Tribe members, trust lands, etc. work with Tribal Authorities
 - o Non-tribal fee-simple lands can choose to work with Tribal Authorities or County; once choice is made, no forum-shopping
 - o County works with tribes' critical areas ordinance, shoreline mgt, etc., when zoning/permitting on the Reservation
 - o Historically, County handles subdivisions, plats, etc., because Tribal Authorities aren't set up to do so
- Back to Bldg Dept: missed revenues due to low number of permits but also came in proportionally under budget
 - o Speculation that the Hirst decision has people confused, holding off on building until things get sorted out: clear process, who's responsible, etc.
 - o County Bldg apparently does contract work for Brewster: inspections primarily. Pretty much a break-even proposition. Riverside contemplating same deal.
 - o Higby warns that three of his trucks are approaching 200,000 miles; running okay, but heads-up on replacement in relatively near future
- Higby to report in on a quarterly basis, absent emergencies. This was apparently the new Commissioners' first meeting with Bldg.

Second up: “Veterans’ Services”: Dale White, Michael Stewart, and Eric _____ : first two are veterans and founders of the organization in question (<http://www.okanogancountyvets.com/>, accessible from County homepage); Eric is the guy who runs it and has done most of the legwork to make it tick; my understanding is that he’s a county employee, and that the county also provides an \$80,000 budget, but a lot of this is inference)

- Founders managed to get a clinic for vets in Wenatchee; previously closest was Spokane, which wasn’t always real cooperative in serving local (Okanogan County) vets
- More recently, programs at North Valley Hospital (but procedures
- “Choice Program” --- three “levels”
 - o Choice _____ : allows vets to access private health services not available from VA
 - o Choice 30: allows vets to access private health services if VA services are more than 30 days out
 - o Choice 40: allows vets to access private health services if they live more than 40 miles from the nearest VA facility; this, obviously, is the one that most affects Okanogan County vets.
- Presentation by Eric (projector broken, and not enough handouts to go around)
 - o County Advocacy program (as noted, affiliation and who pays his salary is not entirely clear)
 - o Member of National Rural Healthcare Initiative
 - o Accredited by WA Dep’t of Veterans’ Affairs
 - o Generates >\$2M for the County (not clear where money comes from or who actually benefits)
 - o Accreditation means it can interface directly with the VA, rather than through WA Dept Vet Affairs; this saves a lot of time and confusion, gets services to the vets faster
 - o Leading office in state, not least because Eric gets paid and therefore shows up for work; presumably a lot of other places use volunteers only, as was the case here until Eric hired
 - o Veterans, through pensions, etc., bring ~\$25M into the county
 - o Partnerships forged with hospitals, WorkSource, etc., to better serve vets
 - o Eric claims that his program is becoming a model for veterans’ organizations country-wide; the others concur

- o Basically, Eric is looking for more dough: needs somebody to man the office when he's in the field.
- o DeTro says it's a great program, County should pony up; Hover and Branch prepared to look into it.

2:50-ish PM --- DeTro leaves; Hover and Branch descend into Executive Session for 30 minutes with three women, personnel matters, there being no citizens threatening to comment during the Citizens' Comment session. Executive Session lasts 35 minutes (extension duly announced by Ms. Johns). Hover returns and, seeing me still in attendance, mentions they're trying to decrease the number and duration of Executive Sessions, but are still contracting HR out & it means necessary procedures, litigation, etc. Fair enough, I think, time will tell.

I hung around for another hour out of curiosity, as they approved the Consent Agenda, among other things. They are still relying heavily on Ms. Johns for procedural advice, and she appears to know her stuff.

Perry dropped in around 4:00 to announce that some state senator (Danzl) had been appointed by the Trump Admin. in DC, so affected County Commissioners would be required to vote on a panel of nominees put forward by the WA Republican Party to replace him next Monday.

Left 4:30

Pleasure to see motivated Commissioners at work.