

**Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting November 22, 2021  
Monday 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  
DH – Dan Higbee, Building Dept  
CH – Cari Hall, Auditor  
LM – Leah McCormick, Treasurer  
NP – Naomi Peasley, Fairgrounds Manager  
BH – Brock Hires, Fair Advisory Committee (FAC) member

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](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: Moving Departments to different buildings; fairgrounds operations budget; managing ARPA funds with social equity in mind; approval of premium pay for county employees; lack of county policy on Covid 19; recruitment and retention of county employees; building department salaries; County Fair budget and amenities.*

00:30 – Pledge of Allegiance

00:43- AH leads discussion on logistics of moving some departments and personnel to different buildings. The idea is to make things run more efficiently. Will bring up at next department head meeting to introduce the idea and get feedback.

10:40 – CB asks about fairgrounds budget. AH says it's mostly done, except for a mower that needs to be purchased. Discussion about what type of mower, BOCC assumes that it must be diesel or gasoline powered. No mention about the possibility of purchasing an electric mower. *(There are several commercial type electric riding mowers on the market).*

13:10 – CB discusses a grant management company that he knows of with regards to managing the county's ARPA funds. The county will be putting out an RFP soon for someone to provide that service. Brings up the importance of incorporating social equity when deciding how to use funds. AH says that everything Okanogan County does already considers social equity. Conversation ensues about what constitutes social equity. CB suggests that it would be

beneficial to have a third party to manage the grant to ensure that all social equity and other requirements are met. AH indicates hesitation about the level of authority this third party would have, especially regarding defining social equity.

25:10 – AH brings up discussion about premium pay for county employees based on exposure to excess risk (*assume this is in regard to Covid19*). CB mentions that risk is partly based on the policies that the County has in place. Lively discussion between CB and AH about essential workers. CB brings up risk (in context of Covid) and that if efforts are not made to reduce risk (such as policies about masks) then how does that factor in to whether they should receive premium pay. AH asks whether there is more risk of violence from someone who resists being asked to wear a mask, or from being infected with Covid when nobody is wearing a mask. CB brings up a situation in Franklin County regarding a commissioner who left a meeting. AH accuses CB of insulting his intelligence and insists that there is no legal requirement to wear a mask in public places. AH argues that we will never get rid of Covid so why should we make any attempt to enforce rules to control it. CB mentions the importance of abiding by the rules our government imposes regardless of whether we agree with them. JD suggests that if the Attorney General is corrupt then it is OK to disregard the law. CB says that he expects that elected officials such as AH have a responsibility to know what the law is. JD says that it is an injustice that people who have chosen not to vaccinate are losing their jobs. Says that vaccines are killing people. AH asks about why there aren't any death records for people who had the polio and smallpox vaccine. AH says there is hypocrisy about what affects other people's lives and what doesn't. AH says that this is not political because there is absolutely no scientific evidence to support the fact that vaccines work. JD asks about why there is such opposition to hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin – it proves that this is all a big game. AH gives example of a meeting he went to where he voluntarily put on a mask. Asks CB why does a mask protect others but not yourself. AH states that the vaccine does not protect people from getting Covid – it is purely therapeutical. JD gives example of a county somewhere that had a very high vaccination rate and also a very high covid rate. CB points out that people are citing facts without complete information that promotes a false message. AH wants to know why the Biden Administration is pushing so hard for mandates. CB expresses the hope that public will see this conversation as a productive discussion rather than an argument. AH prods CB to make a motion regarding a county policy on Covid. CB says he will not make a motion knowing that AH and JD will not support it. States that he has to accept that if someone asks him what the county policy on Covid is, he cannot give them an answer.

1:16:00 – AH brings up budget and how to interpret the spreadsheet.

1:19:00 – CB mentions a workshop he went to regarding recruitment and retention. It's a job seekers market. Discussion about what job seekers are looking for – time and flexibility are important.

1:21:50 – Short discussion about Facebook. CB mentions other topic at WSAC meeting regarding encouragement for all commissioners to participate in voluntary workshops and educational programs.

1:27:00 – CB leads discussion about the Columbia River Water Treaty.

1:28:30 – Dan Higbee reports on salary survey for building department. They are currently about 70% of average. To bring employees up to a reasonable level (85% of average), it would add about \$20K to budget. DH mentions that he recently interviewed someone who wanted the job but the pay was too low. BOCC discusses cost of living, health care benefits, etc. Motion made and passed to have DH work with HR to bring up the pay grades for building dept employees. Further discussion about wages that Okanogan County offers, vs revenue generated, and how inflation factors in. AH mentions that the county is living within its means – costs are covered. Talks about nearby counties and how the jail costs are a factor.

1:51:00 – Budget meeting on Fair (*this is about the County Fair itself, as opposed to the Fairgrounds*). In addition to BOCC, Fair board member Brock Hires is present, Fairgrounds manager Naomi Peasley, and Auditor Cari Hall and Treasurer Leah McKormick. Discussion starts with details of spreadsheet, then gets into the contract for hiring of entertainment, and carnival rides. Conversation about attendance and revenues. Much discussion about how much to charge for entrance fee to fair, and how to handle the musical entertainment. Which day will headliner appear? Is there an advantage to having it on a day other than Saturday? Discussion about how to handle the logistics of charging for the concert separately from the gate entrance fee. AH gives lecture about what a good deal the Fair is. NP says that the Carnival wants a guaranteed \$35K in order to be at the fair. Discussion about the carnival and the value of having it there. LM says that it is important to know which rides they will bring. They can't bring their most popular rides because of space limitations. NP says the carnival doesn't like to come to our county fair because they don't make money. Presents alternative location for the carnival that might alleviate some of the issues. AH presents a scenario for assumptions about attendance and revenue. Discussion about security costs and who pays for it. AH asks about whether ARPA funds can be used for some fair expenses because revenue loss was directly related to Covid. CH reviews discussion they have had about this in the past, with some questions still unanswered. CB asks about who owns the hayfield south of the fairgrounds. Discussion about possibly leasing the field for parking during Fair. AH says that there will be a Fair next year no matter what. Discussion about history of fairgrounds and cost of putting on the Fair and which account the funds were in. AH says that our fairgrounds are in very good condition compared to other counties. CB says that infrastructure is not in such good condition. Discussion about the difference between the Fair budget, and the fairgrounds maintenance budget. AH says that the Fair must exist no matter what. Lively discussion about how the funds for maintaining the fairgrounds are managed. NP brings up a concern with the safety of the grandstands. Discussion about the priority of replacing them. AH suggests that they are lower down the list. Possibly could rent bleachers. CB says it's a well known fact that the bleachers are in poor shape. More conversation about the different funds and how to transfer money between them.

3:17:00- Adjourn for lunch.