

Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting February 14, 2022
PM session

AH – Andy Hover, BOCC Chair, District 2
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC vice-chair, District 1
JD – Jim DeTro, BOCC member, District 3
Crystal ?- Deputy Clerk of the Board

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/commissioner-and-board-of-health-meetings.html> 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

Summary of Significant Discussion: Allocation of ARPA funds including Omak Sand Flats project, broadband (in collaboration with PUD), new justice building, Fire District 15/town of Methow water system, Mazama well, Methow bridge water line project (Winthrop), essential worker pay.

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

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) discussion. *(Background- in 2021 a bill called ARPA became law. ARPA provides funds directly to local governments. Okanogan County received \$8.19 million, and it is up to the County Commissioners to decide how to spend it, within the required parameters.)*

1:59:00 BOCC begins discussion on how to allocate ARPA funds. AH brings up what they have budgeted for specific projects.

CB – mentions “that water source conversion”

AH – there was another one – Omak Sand Flat project.

Discussion about Roni ‘s list (Economic Alliance). (Roni sent the BOCC a list of ranked projects that she thinks would qualify for ARPA funds). This list was apparently created in August of 2021.

2:04:00 – brief discussion about upcoming meeting with WDFW regarding acquisition of lands. One piece in the Methow, one somewhere else. AH doesn’t see any problem with either. (Note – the notes from 2/15/22 PM contain the discussion about this).

2:06:40 – Discussions about ARPA projects resume. Brief mention about Brewster broadband project being pulled off the list, and a project regarding water in the town of Methow.

Some talking about a \$10M project (no mention about what the project is, other than that it is on the ranked list). *Later on it is apparent that they are talking about a project to install infrastructure in the Omak area to facilitate housing development in the area north of Engh Rd. (background- developer pulled out last year because it was too expensive to do all the infrastructure (power, water, sewer etc).*

2:13:44 – Discussion of Methow bridge water line replacement. (Town of Winthrop?); communications projects (Tunk Mt.); PUD (broadband?); Justice building (new bldg. county has purchased); command vehicle; prosecutor incentive (this is deleted);

2:24:15 – AH summarizes what they have budgeted so far out of the \$8.19M from ARPA. After the items that have been committed to are subtracted, (pubic health and road fund) it leaves \$5.3M for other projects. Discussion about how the justice building factors into it.

AH does the math and says they have exactly \$5,368,415 to spend.

CB and AH discuss the philosophy of how to determine where to spend the money.

AH – goes down the list and reads of general catagories: food and nutrition, economic alliance, long term recovery (involved discussion about a project that was started by the former mayor of Pateros but never followed through).

2:32:30 – Detailed discussion about Economic Alliance request (retail academy, staffing).

2:35:30 – CB suggests looking at the infrastructure projects which are more expensive.

2:37:00 – Detailed discussion about a project for the town of Methow. Request was for funding a feasibility study to increase water capacity for fire district 15.

CB confirms that they are OK with spending money on studies. Short discussion about the logistics of how to manage it.

CB brings up the question of whether they want to spend county money on private water systems (referring to the town of Methow group A water system).

2:40:15 – Discussion about Sand Flat project (this is the area north of Engh Rd where the mobile home park was going to go. The project is to put in infrastructure first so the developer doesn't have to pay for it.

JD- but doesn't that just benefit the developer?

Short discussion follows about whether it is better to spend the money on improving the intersection (known as "malfunction junction" where Engh Rd intersects Hwy 97) prior to spending money on development.

The entire project is \$10M – how much of that do we want to pay for?

AH – only wants to spend money if it will allow the town of Omak leverage the remainder to complete the project.

2:47:40 – discussion returns to the town of Methow and FD 15 water system project.

2:49:20 – Methow Bridge water line project. AH – the town of Winthrop can get a lot of money so not inclined to give them too much more.

2:50:55 – discussion about \$1M that has been allocated to Public Health and how they might spend the money.

2:52:00 – Mazama well. They are trying to raise money through a Go-fund-Me. It's not expensive and a one-shot deal so it's low hanging fruit; City of Okanogan water source conversion. AH – says there is funding for this through other grants, so we should not spend too much on this. CB – it serves the county.

2:56:30 – summary of numbers so far leaves around \$600K to spend on other (non-infrastructure) things such as essential worker pay.

3:00:00 – AH reviews how they have arrived at the numbers so far. Emphasis on the fact that this is just a first draft. Need to talk to City of Omak, Economic Alliance and Fire Dist 15th to find out more about their proposed projects.

More involved discussion about the details of the water system in the town of Methow. Who runs the water system? Is it a homeowners assn? Application says it is a Class A water system. Also need to evaluate water and septic needs of Methow business district. More involved discussion about whether it is appropriate to fund a privately owned system. AH says that it is the same as the Mazama well. CB disagrees, saying that the Mazama project is a single well, whereas the Methow project is an entire water system. JD relates story about a water system at a sawmill that had a similar problem, and the solution they came up with. Discussion about options for dealing with the situation in Methow. Are there fire hydrants there now? CB mentions some other projects and how they worked.

AH – says that the study for Methow might indicate that it needs a Utility district to fund water/sewer infrastructure. Talks about the importance of having quality septic systems that are near the river.

3:18:45 – BOCC approves resolution to allow office closure and administrative leave due to excessive snow.

3:20:26 – meeting is adjourned.