

Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting March 7, 2022
AM session

AH - Andy Hover, BOCC Chair, District 2
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC vice-chair, District 1
JD - Jim DeTro, BOCC member, District 3
Crystal Hawley- Deputy Clerk of the Board
MW - Mike Wordon, Sheriff's Dept.
MG - Maurice Goodall, Emergency Mgmt director
PP - Pete Palmer, Planning Director
ARPA - American Rescue Plan Act
MVCC - Methow Valley Citizen's Council

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: Grazing on State lands; complaint filed against employee; Fairgrounds budget and revenue generation; water conservancy board funding; potential lawsuit involving Commissioner Hover; increasing courthouse security; Discussion about drought; Emergency Mgmt budget supplemental for new vehicle; Discussion about Hazard Mitigation Plan, Wildfire Protection Plan and preparedness for nuclear attack.

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.

00:45 - pledge of allegiance

01:00 - Casual conversation between AH and CB about cattle grazing on various types of land, using grazing as part of a forest management plan.

BOCC has invitation to meet with wildlife commission to tour some properties. Some people on the wildlife commission want to eliminate grazing on WDFW lands. AH says that he is strongly opposed to that and will throw the hammer down and do everything he can to oppose it. He will stop approving any sale or transfer of land to WDFW and contact every legislator and make it a big deal. States that we have been really good about approving sales, especially shrub steppe because we want to preserve mule deer habitat. But if they try to remove grazing he will stop all approvals.

CB- gives example of grazing management.

AH - says they graze all over the world and there are lots of ways to manage it. Gives example of some land that is overrun with weeds. Suggests bringing goats in to graze it down and get rid of the weeds without spraying.

CB- says that Conservation NW has a lawsuit against DNR for forest practices. Explains details of what the lawsuit is about. Talks about how much DNR land provides income for local governments.

AH - mentions that there are 2 or 3 lawsuits right now against Okanogan County involving land use.

13:38 -AH- Do we want to go into executive session regarding that complaint?

CB- I would like to invite the person involved in the complaint.

Short discussion about how to approach this situation. *(Apparently a complaint has been filed against a county employee. While it is not mentioned explicitly in this conversation, it seems like they are talking about the Fair Advisory Committee. There was a somewhat intense discussion about the dysfunction of the FAC in an earlier meeting - see notes from Feb 28th AM)*

AH - accepts responsibility as Chair for letting the conversation go that far.

CB- states that he thinks there will be further complaints and that newspapers are looking for information. He thinks there might be articles in the newspaper similar to the school board situation. *(The Omak Chronicle published a front page article recently about issues with a local school board.)*

Conversation continues about the Fair, the purpose of the Fair, and how the budget is managed.

AH mentions the \$300K bathrooms that were built when he came into office, and other upgrades that have been done. General discussion about physical condition of fairgrounds and budget issues.

CB- says he has not seen revenues and expenses for just the Fair laid out clearly.

29:40 AH - shows CB a budget spreadsheet and explains how to read it. This year we have budgeted the Fairgrounds revenue at \$264K. About \$150K of that is from Public Health. Typically we are around \$100K - \$130K revenue.

Fairly extensive conversation about budget details, specifically regarding the fairgrounds.

Gist of the conversation is that fairgrounds operates at a loss. County puts about \$200K per year into it. This is justified because there is a lot of deferred maintenance. AH states that he would be happy if it just broke even and revenue could pay for basic maintenance.

41:30 - CB leaves room, AH and JD talk about weather and gas prices. AH mentions that he is driving his little car and putting his truck in the garage because it's just too expensive. Fertilizer costs are up, too. Food prices are going to go through the roof. CB comes back and talks about small pickup truck that the county owns that is in rough shape. Discussion about keeping old vehicles running rather than buying new. AH mentions that underground sprinklers will save labor. He has been asked about the electrical upgrades. They are upgrading RV pedestals. Discussion about the electrical system at Fairgrounds and how it is not designed to handle maximum load of a full RV park with all of them plugged in. Discussion about the Stampede grounds RV park and how it compares to the Fairgrounds RV park.

50:40 - AH says that PP wants some time on the agenda this afternoon. We have room to add her since we are just doing ARPA.

CB - says that ARPA is important and they need to keep it high priority.

AH - Asks CB for rules on the spending of ARPA funds. They agree that they all should be familiar with them, not just CB.

52:50 - short discussion about confusing the name of a constituent with someone else. The constituent wanted the BOCC to change the tax structure similar to what is being done in Idaho. CB points out that the legislature would have to change the law to allow that to happen.

54:00 - 1:00:05 pause while BOCC work on their computers.

1:00:05 - CB asks if AH and JD have looked at who is on the State Wildlife commission. AH says he has and indicates concern that MVCC's attorney has been appointed. Suggests watching recordings of their meetings.

1:01:00 - BOCC works on computers, more casual discussion about fuel costs, mileage that they are getting on their various vehicles. JD's wife has a car that gets 44 mpg. AH gets around 40 mpg. Discussion about turbocharging and how it affects mileage. *(note- at no time does the BOCC use this opportunity to discuss electric vehicles)* BOCC review minutes and make changes. Discussion about Zoom attendees who do not reveal their name, and how to refer to them in the minutes. AH suggests that they just remove all reference to members of the public who attend the meeting so as to avoid the problem of how to identify people who use pseudonyms.

1:24:50 - AH brings up the water conservancy board and their budget. The WCB needs some additional funding to cover their admin costs. Some discussion about the process of how the WCB works, and possible ways of funding them.

1:26:00 - long pause while BOCC work on their computers.

1:35:00 - AH asks other BOCC members for input on details of long term plan.

1:39:20 - AH asks if County attorney David Gecas can come up for a short Executive session regarding potential litigation "for the thing going on with me". Turns to CB and says "you'll love this". CB - "something you've gotten yourself into?" AH- "I wouldn't say I've done anything but someone sure thinks I have".

CB- returns to conversation about water conservancy board and their legal structure and funding authority.

1:45:10 - BOCC goes into executive session for 15 minutes to discuss potential litigation.

2:02:30 - BOCC returns from Exec session in a jovial mood. AH says "that'll teach you to eyeball everything that you say". Some joking about seeing Sheriff near AH's car earlier.

2:05:44 - Mike Wordon discusses courthouse security. Proposal is to reclassify an existing position, rather than create a new position. Discussion about need to meet with union rep to negotiate the change, and some detail about qualifications the person will need in terms of being certified to handle firearms, etc. Motion made and passed to appoint AH to negotiate this issue with the union. AH says he foresees some issues that will need to be discussed and will get with HR.

2:11:30 - MW leaves. BOCC continues working on computers.

2:12:45 - CB mentions that they could rely on the secretary of the FAC to do minutes. Brief discussion about FAC.

2:14:00 - CB and AH discuss vacation schedule. AH will be gone for 2 meeting days in May. CB will miss a few days in August. Discussion about vacation plans - fishing in Alaska, etc.

2:23:20 - Maurice Goodall shows up for Emerg Mgmt budget supplemental. AH asks him about the snowpack and moisture content. Discussion about how much moisture there is, level of the river, etc. Discussion about communications system and how it is wired. AH looks at [SNOTEL website](#), and discusses the concept of water content vs snow depth. Talks about how last year he noticed that they were taking down the reservoir levels really low all around the state and wonders why.

MG - tries to clarify whether he means it was done intentionally, or if it was because there was not enough water.

AH - says it was done intentionally because last year there was plenty of water.

(note: contrary to Commissioner Hover's statement, the [drought monitor website](#) states "Since 2000, the longest duration of drought (D1-D4) in Washington lasted 117 weeks beginning on December 17, 2019, and ending on March 8, 2022. The most intense period of drought occurred the week of August 3, 2021, where D4 affected 38.13% of Washington land.")

2:30:37 - Public hearing on 2 grants for emergency management in the amount \$61,404. One grant is to purchase vehicle, the other grant is to pay for equipment to outfit the vehicle.

2:33:15 - AH asks MG about wildfire protection plan. MG explains the relationship between the hazard mitigation plan (HMP) which is required, and the wildfire protection plan which can be part of the HMP, but is not required. Plans might be more community oriented - based on each smaller drainage. Discussion about reasons for the delay in getting this plan done. Talk about how drought is addressed. States that the rules explicitly state they are not allowed to address nuclear attack in the HMP. This is something people are asking about due to the situation in the Ukraine. Even if we can't have it in a plan, we might want to meet with the mayors and community members to discuss how people might prepare for surviving. Some mayors have asked if there are bomb shelters in the county.

AH asks if there is a map that shows the radiation fallout areas - suspects that if nuclear attack is in Seattle area, we would be in the fallout path.

MG - I would like to see people think about having 2 weeks of food, water and supplies. This discussion is being had at the state level. There is speculation that they would try to take out the dams, or possibly the transmission lines.

MG - we need to think about the home front, how we keep our government going, and the supply chain. Discussion about supply chain issues and how it affects us here.

Reference to current situation, and how it could be worse.

JD - shares that he has 3 freezers and a good root cellar.

AH - points out that freezers don't work without electricity.

CB - points out that the cities are the big targets, but we are a place where people will come if they have to escape.

MG - relates how during the buildup to Y2K he saw many generators being installed in remote areas here.

AH - emphasizes that it is not the government's responsibility to take care of people. It is up to each individual to stock up. Talks about how he buys extra cans of food when it is on sale.

2:44:30 - adjourn for lunch.