

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Regular Meeting Tuesday, 6/20/17**

Present:

AH-Andy Hover, Commissioner, District 2

JD-Jim DeTro, Commissioner, District 3 (Chair)

LJ –Lalena Johns, Clerk

PH- Perry Huston

BR-Ben Rough, Director, Public Works

GG- Gary George, Public Works Dept. Roadway Maintenance Mgr.

*This is a paraphrasing of conversations by one of several volunteer citizen note takers and published on the website of Represent Okanogan County (ROC.) Any writer's comments or explanations are in italics. For officially approved minutes of Board of Commissioner meetings, normally published at a later date, see [www.okanogancounty.org](http://www.okanogancounty.org).*

**Subjects addressed:**

- **Public Works Update- Road status, staffing, disposal of vehicles, misc admin issues**
- **Citizens Comment Period - Carol Sivak addressed issues relating to use of County horse track at the Fairgrounds**
- **Economic Alliance Quarterly Report**
- **Okanogan Behavioral Health Care – Introduction of new Director**

*Note-taker arrived at 11:00AM*

**Public Works Road Status Report**

GG- reported on Peter Dan Rd. project. They have been working on making it passable. A ramp will be in place by Thursday afternoon.

AH- How high is it?

GG- gave details of dimensions, etc. 18% grade.

AH- Does this mean short vehicles only?

GG- No, it should be OK for all. Doing a good job on grading, etc to accommodate runoff, etc. Intent is to leave road closed signs up (local only), but will have signs for anyone who is driving on it (one lane road ahead, etc).

GG- Gave Road Closed list update: Sinlahekin road open, plan is in place for permanent repairs. Pull temporary culverts before spring runoff, let water run, then put them back in.

AH- Do they want to do this every year?

GG- It depends. Dept of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) wants to wait until the channel is defined.

JD- Why can't we define the channel?

GG- They have been waiting 12 years. It would be easier to just put it back in the old channel. DFW wants to get grant funding to pay for whole project. We agreed to put temp pipes in based on this.

JD- Gave Ben a phone number for someone who might be able to help make this move along faster

GG- Upper Beaver Cr Rd is passable. Still need to do more, waiting for time and money.

AH- The outcome was to get safe passage, correct?

GG- Yes, and we are there now.

AH- So we need to figure out costs and send them the bill. (*not sure who "them" is*).

Discussion about the cause of the Beaver Cr Rd failure, and whose fault it is.

GG- JH Green Rd is open and passable. We will do some more touch-up and address bigger issues later this Fall.

AH- It might be good to talk with the folks up there and find out what their needs are and build a rapport. Include the residents in the process.

Short discussion ensued about the value of having input and buy-in from local residents who live near a project.

GG- South Fish Lake Rd- still closed. Creek diverted and washed out road, not a high priority. Only accesses the DFW boat launch.

GG- Squaw Cr Rd- remains closed, open to local traffic only. We are maintaining minimal condition as road is still sloughing. Resident is going to build a retaining wall on his own property. Plan is to go in this Fall and dig on uphill side of road. Ground is saturated- hope is that it will stabilize enough for us to put in a French drain this Fall that will remove the water from above the road so that it won't happen again.

GG- Loup Loup Canyon Rd- We are going in tomorrow to remove debris. Hope to have it passable by end of next week. Working with DFW.

We are close to having major storm damage issues taken care of. We are only a week behind schedule on our chip seal plan in spite of all the unexpected issues.

Windy Hill, Omak Lake, Landock Rd, McFarland Cr – all open.

### **Public Works Staffing Report**

BR- Staffing level report. We have hired all summer temps. Two positions open – temp truck driver, and temp mechanic. We are not getting applications for mechanic positions.

AH- I had a discussion with Jerry (*? Not sure who this is*). We need to look at the mechanics wages we offer. If we are not paying a competitive wage, we aren't going to get

anyone. Part of the problem for us is that we train them, then they go to the private sector because they can make more. We should consider paying more for experienced mechanics.

BR- I appreciate your willingness to consider this, and perhaps it would be good to discuss details of experiences with individuals off the record.

GG- The maintenance shop needs to look at having one more full time mechanic. It would increase efficiency and keep more equipment on the road.

AH- When a grader breaks down and needs repair, do we bring it back here?

GG- No, we pull the operator off with the equipment and he fixes it. When you take a guy off the crew to do repairs, it slows things down. If we had a dedicated mechanic, the crew could keep working. With the schedule and personnel we have now, one big breakdown would throw the whole thing into chaos. There would be big delays, etc.

BR- Right now we have 3 mechanics in the shop. We only had 2 until yesterday. The point I wanted to make is that there is a direct correlation between the productivity of the road crew and the number and productivity of the mechanics. If we don't have enough mechanics, the road crews can't work to their full potential.

JD- Bring us some numbers on what it would coast and we will look at it.

AH- I would like to see a proposal of the budget impact of a wage increase for mechanics.

GG- From my perspective, it's not so much a problem at the top end of the scale, but more at the entry level. Why do we have a graduated scale? If they were all paid the same, then we could get experienced people right away.

PH- There needs to be a sliding scale- you can't pay everyone the same.

GG- The problem is that the pay is not based on experience, but time worked for the county. An experienced person gets low pay when they start and still has to put in several years before they earn a higher wage.

AH- We should look at putting together some criteria that would determine the starting wage. If they have certain training credentials, that should get them a higher starting wage.

GG- I agree. There can still be an increase as they get seniority, so as to not ruffle the feathers of the more senior employees.

### **Vehicle Disposal**

BR- Address vehicle titles issue. Two issues need to be resolved.

- 1) Does the surplus process need to be in place for getting rid of vehicles?
- 2) Who signs off on it?

PH- We have to comply with State law. Explained nuances of state law regarding surplus county vehicles.

BR- Disagreed with PH on some of the details. Quoted RCW.

AH- Explained the difference between selling the vehicle and trading it in, and requirements for public notices etc.

BR- What is the process if there is not public notice?

AH- Just a resolution by the BOCC.

Bottom line is that there needs to be some kind of paper trail to account for vehicles that are traded in vs. surplus. Auditors need to know what happens to all vehicles regardless of how they are handled. A resolution that is on the record will be sufficient.

BR- I will bring in a resolution next week with list of vehicles that we are trading in.

PH- Cited an example of something that happened in the past where a vehicle was disposed of and nobody knows what happened to it because there was no record.

### **Misc. Admin Items**

PH- Comm. Branch has set up an open house on June 28<sup>th</sup> at Oroville City Hall to meet with WATV folks to discuss their issues. Planning Dept. has people ready to staff the event. Proposes that they put up a map on the wall and have it available for everyone to look at. We will be ready to answer questions and handle signup sheets, etc. All we need is someone from Public Works to explain the methodology behind their decisions.

BR- We can have someone there.

BR- I'm still fine tuning the issue of wages and will bring a report when it is done.

BR- New phone system quote is higher than we expected. \$20K vs \$6K. We still feel that it will save enough to be worth it. We will be able to extend the new phone system to our shops. We spend \$1500-\$2000 per month now on phones for PW. With new system it will drop to about \$150/month. Public Health would pay for some of it. PW would probably pay about \$14K of it. That is not in our budget, so we need to decide if we can get the additional funds, and when.

Discussion of details of proposed new phone system.

BR- In-house CDL endorsements- I've been researching and it looks like it could work pretty well. Need to consult some more with the union.

BR- Lease agreements are coming along.

BR- Solid Waste leachate lagoon- met with SWAC last week. Their recommendation is to go ahead with permit process this year, and do bids and construction next year. We are getting late in the season and bids are high. Met with Parametrics rep, who thinks that all bids will be high due to specialized nature of the work. We are going to get the permit requirements in order and start on that, and then decide if we are going to go ahead with bids this Fall.

We sent out a memo to all our truck drivers and crews to tell them that the BOCC says thanks for all the work they do in difficult conditions.

Lunch Break 12:00 noon – 1:30

Notetaker returned from lunch at 1:39 pm

### **Economic Alliance Quarterly Report**

Roni Deifenbach from Economic Alliance was giving her quarterly report  
We had an affordable housing summit- very challenging event. Not just low-income, but middle income people can't find affordable housing.

George Brady, Lael and Roni were on the committee for planning the Summit.  
They found 3 areas to focus on. Had panels on the following:

1. Gov't regs. – They are big hurdles. County reps and others were on the panel.
2. Financial resources HUD, USDA, private bank were on the panel
3. Developers and real estate people
4. Methow Housing Trust – last minute addition to summit.

The event was at PUD auditorium, packed house. All areas of the County were represented.

Roni spoke with many people and had a difficult time getting developers to present on panels. Reason was that building affordable housing is not feasible. They are losing money. Developing is a business and the bottom line is what counts. One benefit here in OK County is that we are not GMA, which makes it easier, but it is still nearly impossible to make it pay.

Survey revealed the following desires from developers: Clear plans, flexible standards, waiving requirements, fast track permits, have reasonable fees. Developers look for incentives, and this could be an area to work on.

We looked at all properties that are for sale in OK County- many are sitting empty because people do not want to be landlords. Many are in poor shape and need to be torn down. (this costs \$\$).

Many local developers are aging and ready to retire. Discussed creating a mentor program to encourage young people.

Feedback was good- people liked the conference. Need to turn ideas into action.

Many Okanogan businesses are closing their doors. Roni has gone to many businesses to see if she can help, but it's often too late. Need to connect with businesses earlier to see if they can help with finding a successor.

Working with Dept of Commerce. Finding that on-line stores are a huge challenge. E-commerce is putting a lot of local stores out of business. DOC has put together an assessment tool for OK county to be a pilot project in e-commerce. Trying to get more businesses to be on-line suppliers. Need to be progressive-thinking and provide training for people who don't know about how to do on-line commerce.

Roni is doing presentations at the Omak Chamber and CAC about the housing summit.

Omak Wood Products got their certification, which gives laid off employees extended Unemployment benefits, and \$\$ for training in new career. If the mill does get up and running again, these people may have moved on to new jobs and not come back. Mill operation is questionable, as logging roads have washed out and can't get logs down to the mill.

There are some new businesses opening up, which is hopeful.

JD- asked if Roni has been involved in meetings about keeping the Smokejumper base in the Methow.

Roni- I have talked to people, but not attended meetings. Would be happy to go if I know about them.

### **Citizens Comment Period**

2:00 pm Citizens Comment

Carol Sivak – wanted to talk about using the County track for horse events and rodeos, specifically insurance requirement for rodeos and horse events. Said that insurance requirements are too much.

AH- Talked about minimum insurance requirements and how much they cost.

Recommended that her group form an association to qualify for insurance.

Carol- also mentioned that track is not maintained well and there are spots that are dangerous for horses and can cause injuries. Asked if more effort could be put into regular maintenance.

AH- invited Carol to visit track at lunch one day to look at specific areas that need improvement. Discussed getting volunteers.

LJ- Said that volunteers definitely are not allowed to use county equipment. Asked if volunteers can bring their own equipment and do some work. Will check and see.

### **Okanogan Behavioral Health Care Introduction of New Director**

2:30 pm- Okanogan Behavioral Health Care reps presented the new Director.

Lisa (?)

Tenzin (?)

JN- Jim Novelli – new Director.

JN- introduced himself and gave brief history of his experience. Most recently managed the Miles City, MT Mental health system.

AH- Asked how big his former system was

JN- About 100 employees

JN- Funding uncertainty is a source of stress and frustration. We will work together to make sure that we can bring the best services to the most people.

AH- We will meet with you to discuss the proposal to change to a regional system.

JN- My initial reaction is to not rush into anything. There doesn't seem like there is any compelling reason to right now. Need to look at services we may lose by changing from Spokane to more regional support.

AH- That will be good to get input from you and your experience before we make a decision.

JN- We really need to know what's happening with the Federal system and Medicaid dollars.

Lisa- We had some time traveling to get Jim up to date on some of the current issues.

JN- My position is that we can work out solutions to whatever happens. I like to stay calm and steady. I like to get out into the community and meet people and work collaboratively.

Introduction over at 2:42.

Notetaker left at this time.