

Okanogan Board of County Commissioners
08/06/2018

JD—Jim DeTro
AH—Andy Hover
CB—Chris Branch
LJ—Lalena Johns-clerk to the Commissioners
PH—Perry Huston—County Planner
AHub—Angie Hubbard, Planner

This is a paraphrasing of conversations by one of several volunteer citizen note takers and published on the website of Okanogan County Watch (countywatch.org) 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.

Summary of significant discussions

Wolf management. PH has written a draft of a letter to be sent to the directors of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Commissioners make changes and ask Perry to call Director Thompson to see if there's a policy that health and safety are the top priority before sending the letter.

PH has applied for the grant from the Department of Ecology to fund the well-tracker position. He's advertised the open position for Planner 1.

Ballots are being received for the Lake Management District election.

The BOCC adopts a new section to OCC17A.

The BOCC has a short discussion concerning watershed planning in the lower reach of the Methow

1:30 Wolf Management.

PH—hands out drafts of letters written to Kelly Susewind, Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Jim Kurth, Director, United States Fish Wildlife Service. All three commissioners read them.
JD—That USFWS guy, Gregg, never learned anything. He's as arrogant as he came in. I thought about going to Brian Dansel, Zinke's head guy. I'd like to see that guy, Gregg, reprimanded. I should have asked his boss if they're in favor of obstruction of justice. (Notetake assumes he's referring to Brian Dansel, a former Ferry County Commissioner who resigned that post earlier this year to take a job with the US Department of Agriculture. Ryan Zinke is Secretary of Interior.)

PH—That's not the way to frame it. The Tonasket guy said somebody needed rescue and she was rescued. It's over. We need to get a clear policy statement of what they're going to do next time.

AH—Prior to your email to us, I sent an email to the department state supervisor. I'm going to keep after these guys to do this. I forwarded the reply to JD & CB. I think he's fairly new. He's gone through & talked to staff about how they feel about the Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species. They were concerned if they give authorization—example: a helicopter dipping out of a like with an ESA-listed fish. Before we send a formal letter we should find out from him what policy changes they'll make.

PH—The missing piece is what’s coming down from the top.

AH—Then we need to know the formal policy.

PH—The guy we talked to did what he thought he was supposed to do.

CB—It’s a heat of the moment thing. Even if you have a plan it’s hard to do it in the field. We want to make sure Law Enforcement can meet their objectives. The sheriff isn’t satisfied yet about what happened. I don’t know if getting a guy fired will help. It’d cause more polarization.

PH—I can accept his invitation to the guy.

AH—All I’m saying is I had a telephone discussion today and it seemed like he said—no matter what, human life & safety come first. So do we want to write a letter like this that’s fairly aggressive? Is that what we want?

CB—If we send this letter, what’s our objective at the end? The sheriff doesn’t say—“well, if it’s a USFS person, that’s their job, not ours.” We don’t want this. The sheriff will stand behind their guy. This problem can be fixed by policy.

JD—From our side, we’re willing to build trust, but they break that trust.

CB—We need to keep building the trust.

JD—Why do these agency guys keep saying “no rotor”? The Fish & Wildlife guy can’t tell the DNR guy to stand down. They don’t realize the sheriff is the ultimate authority in such things in the county.

AH—Search and Rescue uses Navy resources. Frank (Rogers, Sheriff) gives the authority to Rick to call the Navy to say we need help and usually it’s a training mission, so there’s no bill. Who called the helicopter? We need inter-agency cooperation so we know that if a life’s in danger, here’s what we do.

JD—Reads sheriff’s interview with KREM. They’re still not cooperating with us.

CB—What do we need for them to do to cooperate?

PH—A big problem is that people worry they’ll do something wrong and end up in trouble.

AH—Yes.

PH—The ESA actually allows for all sorts of exceptions. Go to the top to see if they’re doing what they should. We need to figure out what the staff is being told. I assume what the BOCC wants is a policy so there’s no need to make 19 phone calls about what are we going to do.

PH—I think it comes from the top that the ESA comes first.

CB—The letter is OK if PH contacts the department director to see if there’s a policy that health & safety come first. We need everyone to know what the policy is with health & safety.

AH—I want to make sure that Skagit and Whatcom Counties have some conversation with them.

PH—I’ll hold the letter to next week and I’ll talk to Thompson to see what he wants to do. Willing to speak bluntly about what we’re looking for and they’re looking for. We need to remind them that the BOCC is not trying to kill all the wolves.

CB—The letter has four items.

PH—The US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a habit of “yarding in”. The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) needs to make sure it’s doing the same.

CB—It’s the blame game.

AH—The WDFW is told they can’t do anything until the USFWS says it’s OK.

AH—That’s talking about the management plan for wolves, but this issue is health and safety.

PH—But if the management plan puts the wolf first, the people will be reluctant to act.

AH—But even if there’s no management plan for a species, there should still be a policy about human health and safety.

CB—Resolve the issue about public safety right away. The rest of the letter is about troubles with coordination, but driving second and third paragraphs about impediments to the sheriff’s ability to respond. I don’t know what the sheriff needs to do that.

AH—The need is for the Fish & Wildlife guys to call the sheriff up first-off if a guy’s in danger.

CB—We need to ensure there's a joint policy—if a life is in danger, call the sheriff. The sheriff makes an investigation about what's going on. Every call requires an investigation. What if somebody makes a fake call? We don't know what's going to happen.

AH—If you walk up a trail two or three times and the same thing happens, you have to investigate.

CB—The letter says “a great number of confusing statements”. Take out the “great”. It should be only “a number”. Also, the letter talks about the Game Commission. Is it the Fish and Wildlife Commission?

PH—I'll see what it says on their website.

PH—I'll contact Thompson and see if he's got a course of action before we send the letter.

AH—Because I just talked to him today and I want to know if you're doing what is wanted.

PH—I'll make the call.

2:20 Agenda items 3 (well tracking system), 4 (WRIA 49) and 6 (Planning Department Budget).

PH—Well tracking—We sent the grant application for the \$150,000 grant. Sent it to Vanessa at Department of Ecology (DOE). We talked about several smaller (\$50,000) plan grants (from local and tribal sources). They use the same form. We're getting them ready to go.

PH—Budget—Voluntary Stewardship Program is going out. We get paid by reimbursement so it's budget neutral.

PH—I've just advertised the position for a new staff member. It's partially funded in the budget. From mid-September on. Hiring is predicated on the spending continuing through 2019.

PH—Staff temp person for well tracking. We hope this person will do nothing but well tracking. The smaller grants could fund two staff support positions.

PH—Planning Department's current staff:

1 Senior Planner

1 Planner 2

1 Planner 1

Rocky

PH

CB—Staffing in the Planning Department is short.

AH—Yes, short. Do we need another Planner 1?

PH—When I hired on, I had 11 direct-reports on the staff. Lots of Planners. Maybe overstaffed a little. Eliminated position since it was fat.

PH—We had lots of cross-training. Planner 2 Hubbard is doing what would fall to the Senior Planner. I try to avoid having Planner 1s do Conditional Use Permits but it's getting close to out of specs. I haven't been able to hire a Planner 2, so I hire 1s and train them. The Planner 1s can't get promoted until someone above them leaves. Some places promote by rank. You get more money if you know more.

CB—It's an incentive. Now you can't qualify for promotion if you don't know the job.

PH—It sets you up to advance, but not necessarily get advanced.

CB—Also, if you're training everybody from the ground up, it's hard to get new ideas.

PH—I advertised the new position last week.

AH—I think we have to continue to fund the position.

PH—Maybe we could defray the cost with some of the grant money. The \$150,000 grant is only one time, but the \$50,000 grants may be renewable.

PH—I'd probably be better off with two Planner 2s and one Planner 1, but probably no 2s will apply.

CB—Where did you advertise?

PH—Work source and local papers.

CB—If it's advertised for a Planner 1 with the Planning Assoc. of Washington or a similar group, you're looking for someone right out of college. Eastern Washington has a good planning school.

PH—On the topic of amendments to the budget, I may have enough in the Professional Services budget so I won't have to amend the budget.

AH—If the VSP revenue line will be more than you actually received and the expense line is less than you spent.

AH—Talk to Cari (Hall) about how to set this up. It's good to have the expenses and revenue broken out by project. If reimbursable, they zero each other out.

PH—The budget will start getting pressure re: Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO).

2:54 Lake Management District

PH—Ballots for the Lake Management District are coming in. Also phone calls. Some people tell me they're voting no because Canada should pay for the whole thing. Today I heard that a jet-ski got caught in milfoil, and the rescue boat also got caught in it.

CB—Did this happen someplace where they don't spray?

PH—No. Canada has a different process. They don't spray but they put the stuff directly in the water.

2:58—Business License code revision

PH—Distributes two lists to the BOCC.

PH—The first list I gave you are business licenses on the books now. Nightly rentals & farming aren't on the list.

PH—The second list is kennels. It's a list of specific requirements. If you want to keep it, I suggest you create a business license for kennels.

PH—A question is how to deal with violations. Sometimes the Sheriff's Office gives a citation. If the sheriff doesn't want to get involved, the Prosecuting Attorney makes a decision on my recommendation.

CB—What about a joint system of enforcement? The Planning Department does a lot of the Sheriff's Office does some, too.

PH—Kittitas County has a code enforcement guy in the Planning Department. Ellensburg's code enforcement is in the Police Department.

3:00 OCC 17A(400)—Water Availability Area

PH—Here's Ordinance #2018-10, adopting a new section of 17A(400).

AH—I move to adopt 2018-10.

JD—Any discussion?

AH—So we had all the changes looked at by legal.

PH—Amend the ordinance through Attachment 1. Substitute this Attachment 1 instead of the Attachment 1 that came out of the Planning Commission.

CB—Did we adopt the previous Attachment 1?

PH—No.

CB—We're amending the draft?

PH—I recommend the draft and you adopt the ordinance.

CB—I think this way will work, so I second the motion.

JD—Vote is 3-0 for the amendment.

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AH—Lower reach of the Methow (48).

JD—Before 49? Or simultaneously?

CB—Next thing is watershed planning 49. Look at the basins. Question is to include Tunk Basin.

AH—If there's not enough water available and we include Tunk, that stops subdivision.

JD—The subdivisions in place now are likely the only ones that can be done. I don't see that you can get a developer to do that. There are no real attractive spots.

CB—Reads exceptions for exceptions for subdivisions.

AH—So what should we do?

CB—17A(400) apply overlay to Tunk Basin?

PH—I'll have staff prepare maps and ordinance for the Tunk Basin.

CB—What makes up the lower Methow?

AH—Everything from the confluence of the Methow and Twisp Rivers all the way down.

3:30

PH leaves

Notetaker leaves.