

Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting July 11, 2022
AM session

AH – Andy Hover, BOCC Chair, District 2
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC vice-chair, District
JD- Jim DeTro, BOCC member
LJ- Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
CH- Crystal Hawley- Deputy Clerk of the Board
NP - Naomi Peasley- Fairgrounds manager
MG - Maurice Goodall – Emergency Management Director
PP – Pete Palmer – Planning Director
PJ - Pam Johnson – Treasurer’s Office
C. Button -Cindy Button – Aero Methow Exec. Director
Ms. Jackson (on Zoom)- member of public
IS - Isabelle Spohn (on Zoom)- member of public

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, Click [here](#).

Summary of Significant Discussion: Mid-Valley Hospital; Public Comment; County Fair update; Emerg. Mgmt update – concern about Fire Depts responding to EMS calls; Housing Coalition update; Planning Dept update- Tunk moratorium, enforcement of code violations, VSP re-org, advertising for Methow Sub-Area committees; Public Hearing on MHMP; Methow EMS District funding.

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.

3:06 – Pledge of Allegiance

11:30- Discussion about the issues with mid-valley hospital (3 board members resigned). CB states that interim director wants to speak before the BOCC because her efforts to speak at the hospital board meeting were denied and she wants to speak on the record. Some discussion about the legality of what happened and the possible next steps. It appears that the process was legal, but lacking in opportunity for full participation.

16:00 – public comment period. Ms. Jackson asked why the agenda for the public health meeting tomorrow is not posted. AH responded that he has notified public health and asked them to post it. Isabelle Spohn asked about the staff report for the multi hazard mitigation plan. Some discussion about problems with the audio.

Casual conversation between CB and AH about the logging project up the Twisp River, scheduling issues and difficulties with joining meetings by phone from remote areas, animal shelters. CB says a constituent contacted him with info that when a county’s population increases that they are required to have an animal shelter. He is not familiar with this rule and

will follow up. More discussion about pet shelters and the challenges of owning a pet with the cost of pet food going up. Shelters are seeing more dogs being dropped off.

28:00 – CB asks JD about when the ORV ordinance was implemented. Some discussion about history of this issue.

31:30 – Naomi Peasley reports on Fair. FAC met last Thursday and made lots of progress. Entertainment headliner has been secured and on-line ticket sales are in place. NP reviews fair vendor contracts and new fee schedule. \$500 per 20 ft of frontage, and \$20/foot over that. There were a few adjustments for particular vendors. Discussion about a discount for the Fire Dept booth and if there is consistency. BOCC says they would like to see a fee schedule that has the criteria for the fees clearly spelled out. NP says that the BOCC can contact the Vendor Committee directly. AH says that they need to do this to satisfy the state auditor. Discussion about process for how the vendor contracts are approved and signed. Discussion about bids for chain link fencing (3 were submitted), and which one to go with.

55:50 – Maurice Goodall – mentions that there has been some mud in the Mazama area due to heavy rains, and forest service and DNR are discussing solutions with locals. FD3 has been called out for medical assists with Lifeline and they are concerned. AH says that this was discussed a while back when Lifeline met with BOCC (*See notes from 5/9/22 AM*). JD says that he has heard from Fire Districts also and they are fed up with all the callouts. Discussion about which districts, whether a FD has a legal right to decline callouts. MG mentions that the volunteers get no compensation, and with the price of gas and other expenses it is a large burden. AH talks about the different areas and whether they fall within an EMS district and what the rules are. CB talks about the interaction between Lifeline and the Fire Districts and the responsibility they feel to the community. Clarification about the difference between getting called out for an accident vs callouts for an emergency in someone's home. CB asks about what happens if the FD refuses to respond to a callout.

1:05:07 – Lanie Johns gives her report. Mentions FD15 (Brewster/Pateros area) that does both EMS and Fire response. CB talks about a levy in Oroville that didn't pass because people didn't understand the services provided. Once they understood, the levy passed.

LJ- reports that she has spoken with the architect (Beaman) about project they are working on. Housing coalition met last week to talk about homeless issues. Suggestion that they add winter shelter in Okanogan and include representatives from [FYRE](#) and also tribal reps in the coalition. Revenue received in the homeless and affordable housing fund. LJ reviews the coalition's plan for housing. LJ would like to know if there is anything the BOCC would like to say to the housing coalition board about priorities. AH says he would like to have a meeting to address the increasing homelessness issues. JD says there are some people who should be incarcerated. LJ says there is a show house and the funds go towards helping people afford housing. CB- proposes a meeting with the housing coalition to discuss goals and get a better understanding of the situation.

LJ – says there is an application for a position (*it is unclear which position this is*) and they will be interviewing.

1:14:40 – Pete Palmer reports on planning dept. Permit review committee met. DOE should be making decisions about their rules about water. Talked about water issues in Tunk. Talked about how to determine Ordinary high water mark. Planning uses a biologist, Public Health and Public Works use different methods. AH clarifies that it doesn't have to be a biologist, but rather someone who is certified. CB asks why other departments use different methods than planning. PP – DOH runs different regulations. Septic and wells require different setbacks under

health rules. These things get installed sometimes before planning ever sees the application. PP says that planning should be the first department that approves in order to avoid problems with people who install septic systems and wells only to find that they can't build because they have no legal water. CB – asks if a site analysis is required for septic system. PP – not until they are ready to develop. AH – suggests that they tell DOH that they can't issue septic permits until site analysis has been done. Discussion about what the main concern is for septic – is it proximity to shoreline, or water table level? PP – relates story about a variance that Planning denied, but it was appealed and the hearing examiner approved it based on the premise that if one county department approves something, then another department can't decline it. PP – Mentions enforcement issues regarding compliance. [Skalitude](#) is not applying for permits for their festivals, and there is also a place in Harmony Heights that is out of compliance (residential access being used for commercial purposes). Planning will work on enforcement through a couple different avenues. AH – asks about why there are a whole lot of public records requests for Twisp river area. PP – says there is a lot of vegetation removal and it has garnered a lot of attention so people are requesting info.

PP – says she has been asked to be VP of a planning group for Columbia River area. Most meetings are on Zoom. If BOCC would make appointment she will bring more info next week. BOCC agrees to the appointment.

PP – regarding sub areas in the Methow, it is ready for letter of interest for members. BOCC approves to send out to public.

The VSP committee met and has agreed to re-group to look at membership and possibly revise. Brings up the Tunk Moratorium. Asks for original version so she can update it. PP says she removed one of the “whereas” sections. The revised ordinance would extend the 2 year review period. The code would be revised to allow more time to complete the water study.

AH- asks about sub area planning zones in Methow, and if district use chart changes. PP – no, it doesn't. AH confirms that all it does is create sub area units so that advisory committees can be formed. PP says she heard from IS about MHMP and SEPA.

1:30:25- Public Hearing on Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (MHMP). MG reports that the Plan was completed, turned into WA state, then sent to FEMA. FEMA suggested a few changes, which were done, and now we are ready for BOCC to approve. The whole process is lengthy, and the current plan has expired. The Conservation District has completed their part, and the City of Okanogan has requested that it be approved so they can apply for funds.

MG notes that there has not been a lot of time for public input.

PP – says there was a determination of non-significance (DNS) on the SEPA. This is because it was determined that there would be no environmental impact because it is just a written plan with no ground disturbance.

AH – asks about alternate escape routes for egress in the event of wildfire, and how the OCOG backroad study falls into this.

MG- talks about section on Community Wildfire Protection plan, and speculates on where the mention of alternative escape routes should fall. Should it be the MHMP, or the CWPP?

Presents hypothetical situation about a remote home with long one-way driveway. Should county require a loop road for every house? AH – asks if dead end roads could be located with GIS so that firefighters would know if there is escape?

MG – says there could be a list, but it would be hard to get that level of info to everyone. Local firefighters tend to know their area, but visiting firefighters may not know. We do not fall under the same category of risk such as tsunami escape routes. Does not know how to list every

single road and escape routes for each. CB – says the plan comes with recommendations (not regulations). Similar to Comp plan. Policy changes can result from plan with input from agencies and public. One recommendation is to adopt regulations to improve safety regarding fire. Should we create new regulations about egress from subdivisions? We could change the subdivision codes for future development. MG – good point. These are recommendations that could lead to discussion. CB – This could lead to a tool that helps us integrate with other groups that are working on related topics (conservation district, air quality groups, etc.). AH – we could talk about alternate routes and get them on a GPS system that the public could access to show them the lay of the land and potential alternate routes. More discussion needs to happen. PP – a lot of it boils down to education. Some of these routes exist, but people don't know about them. A lot of the problems stem from the illegal structures that county doesn't know about. Gives example of computer apps that give wrong info. Some of these apps have been provided with the correct info but refuse to update it. CB – cites chapter in MHMP that mentions alternate escape routes.

1:48:15 – Public comments (*several minutes are spent working on audio issues*);

2:00:00- IS – Thanks BOCC for addressing several of her concerns. Requests that they reconsider the Determination of Non-Significance (DNS). Mentions comments by the consultants that are emphasized in capital letters regarding the importance of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Reads her statement regarding the need for this plan to be updated and implemented. Her comments emphasize the need for alternate escape routes from the Methow Valley in the case that Hwys 20 and 153 are closed or blocked by wildfire at the same time.

AH asks if there is anyone else who wants to testify. No others are interested. Public testimony is closed, BOCC opens discussion on whether to adopt the plan. CB – says that delaying adoption won't fix all the things that were brought up. Mentions timelines that are in the plan that should help move it along. Can't guarantee that everything will happen. There are lots of people working on coordinated efforts. (Fire Departments, etc). There is an action item in the plan to identify roads, etc. Prefers to get plan in place so they can move forward. JD – there are things in this plan that are just going to have to be a work in progress. There are no solid answers to some of the problems that have been brought up. AH – talks about the incidents where people died. Mentions working with USFS and their policies. The other one was a driveway, and there were issues with getting equipment in there and moving it quickly. We should work with Public Works to identify roads. Gives example of Meyers Cr. With tight switchbacks where trucks can't go. Agrees that delaying approval of this plan is not going to make anything happen faster. Mentions three examples in the Methow Valley that could be used for escape (Boulder Cr to Conconully; Texas Creek; Gold Cr to Chelan). JD – talks about 30 mile fire and how there was opportunity for them to escape. CB – talks about how increased development impacts the ability for egress. He went to a meeting with people from Paradise CA who shared their experience. The Emergency manager from Oregon talked about the difficulty of coordinating agencies from all around the state. CB suggests that the BOCC adopt the plan, but they also need to make effort to implement the plan. He takes the criticisms to heart. There is a motion to adopt the MHMP with the condition that the plan be reviewed annually along with projects that are being implemented. Motion is seconded, voted and approved.

2:29:04 – Presentation from Pam Johnson, Cindy Button. AH says the Treasurer's office brought up an issue. The Aero Methow contract is different than other EMS districts. The contract with

AeroMethow requires the county to dip into reserves because the funds are not collected ahead of time. Discussion of how the funds are collected. AH suggests changing the contract to prevent this from happening. Lengthy, detailed conversation about the timing and method of collection and payment of funds.

3:28:41 – agreement is reached on how to handle the payments. BOCC adjourns for lunch.