

**Okanogan Board of Health**  
**Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 1:30 PM**

*These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://countywatch.org> and are not the official county record of the meeting. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later time, see the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at <https://www.okanogancounty.org>.*

**Present:**

Lori Jones (LJ), Board of Health Director  
Mariann Williams (MW), BOH board member  
Jim Wright (JW), BOH board member  
Jill Gates, BOH, Secretary  
Sabrina Smith, Okanogan County Health District  
Mike Harr (MH), Okanogan County Health District  
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Jim Detro (JD), County Commissioner, BOH Board Chairman  
Andy Hover (AH), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Jennifer Richardson, Okanogan County Health District  
Krisha Warenstadt, Public Health Nurse

*Time stamps refer to a Zoom recording on the County Watch website.*

***Summary of Important Discussions:***

- *\$3.5M contract amended, directs \$49,000 to emergency preparedness.*
- *Overdose calls doubled over past year, eclipsing Covid (managable at two cases/day)*
- *Tiny shelters and added space in shelters planned for homeless this winter*
- *Brainstorming over solutions to poorly protected cesspool on lakeside property brings up re-writing of rules, need for connection to existing sewer extension, and improving inter-departmental communication (instead of ringing up lawyer bills)*
- *Public health has new Board member, seeks Environmental Health specialist.*

1:30 - *While waiting for a quorum, Commissioner Detro is presented with a card for his retirement, along with some cupcakes, since next month "who knows what the roads will be like?" He says "after elections today, I'll be a lame duck."*

5:43 - *Introductions. Sabrina Smith, a nurse from Montana, is a new board member.*

Contract Amendment - **LJ:** This regulates emergency preparedness money, testing, Covid, public information, mass vaccinations. \$49,000 of that is for our emergency preparedness requirements. **MW:** What are we going to do with the money? **LJ:** Insure the County is safe: Flu surveillance, Ebola—a few years ago had to monitor a case. We still occasionally have to monitor a TB case. **AH:** This is \$3.5M? **LJ:** That's the total consolidated contract ...**JG:** It changes the scope, not the amount. We're still obligated to do education, testing. It's a two-year contract. *Amendment approved.*

Community Health - **LJ:** We were doing our health care partner calls weekly, now it's gone to monthly. Monitoring the flu. The hospital's having a difficult time transferring out. We're monitoring North Central Hospital closely. Here's a printout from 2007 to the end of October.

You can tell when Heroin, then Fentanyl entered the County. It shows we've almost doubled the amount of overdose calls from last year—88. Almost nine a month. Susan Kingston from the U of W alcohol and drug group is seeing real issues with the amount of Fentanyl we're seeing throughout the state. Next month we'll show tables of graphs to show the difference with three years ago. Health Officer Dr. Wallace has made it a disease of public health interest, will be getting updates from the hospital. JD: ...A lot of those people who don't want help. Where do they get the money to do (drugs)? LJ: With our syringe exchange we've seen a drop. They're smoking, not ingesting. We're still having Covid cases, averaging 15 a week. It's manageable now; we're focusing on other issues, and well aware of the drug problem. JG: How much RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) infection in adults? LJ: there have been two. CB: Fentanyl is one of the recreational drugs of choice. This one exceeds the risks of crack. LJ: Way more potent. It was used strictly in end-stage cancer. JG: It's more available. You can make it synthetically. CB: ...some said they went from marijuana to heroin because it's easier to hide. The fix is drug education. War on drugs was never effective. The ones in jail are the victims.

29:19 - Transportation and Housing - LJ: With people from the Dept. of Transportation next door we're writing for a rural equity-type grant. They did a survey and asked what barriers kept (*homeless?*) people from getting to appointments. 60% replied transportation. They'll be transporting them to the homeless shelter in Okanogan. You have to be sober. We're trying to work around that. They're adding tiny shelters, adding space for housing in the winter. LJ *mentions they have a new board member, Sabrina, whom they had met at the Stampede mass vax event.*

Environmental Health Update - *At last month's meeting they discussed someone's complaint about their neighbor's property on Lake Osoyoos where a septic pit is covered only with a plank of wood. The owner is unreachable.* MC: I got the attorney Chuck Zimmerman involved in the complaint we had last month. He says not much to be done. ...We're thinking of modifying that regulation to let hard-to-trace-back systems be "grandfathered in". CB *wonders if all the septic systems installed on East Lake (Osoyoos) have been approved.* CB: There was a regulation if a certain distance from the sewer line, if the system failed, you had to hook up. MC: If you're within 200 feet. CB: That was the strategy for paying for the system in the first place. I'm concerned about that being lost in translation between Health and Planning. Don't see why not with the city—they take payments through utility bills. In the past they were not all that willing. But they have to take the payment. The excuse is "there's no room on the bill"! *If people are close enough they should be forced to join the system.* MC: When was the extension built? CB: 2006. It goes all the way to Veranda Beach. MC: As the crow flies, this property is not very far from Veranda Beach.

41:45 - CB: ...If there are places not hooked up yet we should be looking to them as infrastructure projects. JW: Champerty Shores had their new line made for just their capacity. I'm kind of leery about plywood over a cesspool. Don't know if it's full or not. Someone could drown. CB: It's a little disturbing. Maybe they can't afford to put in a system. We haven't figured out a mechanism to make that work. Community Block Grant? We spent that money to do a sewer system and people aren't hooking up to it. AH: Something should be done. MC: If we could write a more stringent county code into place, including other agencies. AH: Needs to be a civil infraction. Now it's jailable. JD: The Prosecutor's office needs to be on board. AH: If we all agree, they'll (*go along*). CB: You have the enforcement side and the financial side. ...You have to create workable laws... AH asks MC about grants for sewer systems. MC *mentions an Ecology Dept.-backed loan.*

52:00 - AH: The only way to get it fixed is to condemn the property. MC: You can't... Only if

there's a known contamination point. **CB:** We can write better rules. *AH says they should call the septic permit a zoning permit. There is a consensus that Planning, Building and Health should work more closely to remedy problems like septic permits being granted only to have building permits refused, and enforce site inspections prior to permitting.* **JD:** There's a communication gap. Nothing more that infuriates the public. **MC:** The biggest concern is not having that consistent code at a county level. **JD:** Make it so simple you can't miss it. *AH talks of people not taking shoreline setbacks into account until after they've bought their permit.*

*MC recommends "Smart-Gov." for "pooling data points."* **AH:** Planning will implement it in March/April. ...Do we have a direction? **LJ:** We'll be meeting with planning. **CB:** Conversation needs to be happening. You can't always leave it up to attorneys. *Here AH agrees.* It's a research project. You can look at what the other jurisdictions are doing. I'd rather do it than have someone impose a law on us. **MC** (*finding the rule they are looking for*) : "All access shall be secured so as to minimize unauthorized access." Dr. Wallace can do a Health Officer's order. We've never done that. Is it a Court Order? **LJ:** It will be signed by the County and delivered by an officer. **CB:** Just need to show the potential for a law being broken. **LJ:** Just a "cease and desist". **CB:** Philosophically we continue to create these circumstances harder and harder to resolve when we get there.

**LJ:** On a happy note, we're advertising for an Environmental Health specialist. Mike handles the on-site. **CB:** Mike, you're doing a great job. **MC:** It gets convoluted.

**LJ:** Dr. Wallace must have an emergency of some sort. As far as the Health Officer's report, I've basically repeated what he said at our meeting last week.

1:18:00 - *Meeting adjourned.*