

Okanogan Board of Health
Tuesday, October 11th, 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), BOH (Board of Health) Director
Mariann Williams (MW), Board Member
Jim Wallace (JW), Health Officer
Patricia Stanton (PS), Okanogan City Council, BOH board member
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member
Jim Detro (JD), County Commissioner, BOH Board Chairman
Jill Gates, BOH, secretary
Lionel Orr (LO), BOH board member
Dr. Liz Walker (LW), Clean Air Methow
Sabrina Smith
Edward Goss, member of public
Mike Harr (MH), Environmental Health, Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition
Larry Gilman (LG), resident having an issue with a building permit

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

Summary of Important Discussions:

- *Public comment from distributor wanting to provide more water for residents without wells. Hover repeats his objection to legalizing “eternal” cisterns, Environmental Health expert Michael Harr says water rights necessary.*
- *Air quality a “year-round issue”, especially in Methow and since September; 450 filters distributed, collaboration growing among local organizations.*
- *State funds appropriated for people isolating from Covid; Health Dept. to give employees \$5,000 retention incentive.*
- *Covid continues to drop, STDs on the increase, tribes and county working together with good results.*
- *Confusing building permit application form leads to expensive misunderstanding, wording to be clarified.*
- *Board agrees to test for sewage leakage on property near Lake Osoyoos; need to react to resident’s concerns outweighs “letter of the law”.*

0:47 - Public Comment period - *EG who delivers water in bulk wonders if there are any changes in permitting re. rain water such as other counties have for people who don't have wells. EG: Are there plans to open more locations throughout the county—schools, fire stations and county facilities for people to be able to buy potable water closer to where they live? AH: What's your allowable delivery amount per day? EG: 1,000 gallons. In April we'll have a 3,500 gallon truck. AH: Is there a maximum amount you can buy per day? EG: I'm just buying it from the city of Tonasket. AH: Other than Culligan, and 5-gallon bottles, we've never had anyone deliver in bulk before... MH: We've had this discussion, and my biggest concern is it would*

have to do with permit exempt wells. Water has to come from some source and we have to make sure it's safe for consumption and insure it's (enough) to serve the building purposes.

AH: And ongoing. If we allow a building permit with a cistern for all of eternity... **MH:** If it's not coming from on-site it has to come from somewhere that has proper water rights. *AH will discuss this with EG at a later date.*

4:22 - Clean Air Methow - *LW gives a slide presentation to update the Board on wildfire readiness, and response, which began in September. Due to the dry and warm forecast until the end of the month she says the county burn ban, excepting in closed pits, will extend until then. how to mitigate the effects of wood smoke and outdoor burning for all and how to make sure vulnerable populations aren't disproportionately suffering from wildfire smoke.* **LW:** Liberty Bell H.S. took a match, scheduled to be played at home, to Okanogan today." Okanogan and Omak have their share of "orange and red days", (*she shows a chart with colors ranging from safe, green, to very unsafe, purple*) but (*the Methow Valley*) keeps topping the list. ...The NY Times reported that wildfire smoke has now reversed all the advances that we had made since the Clean Air Act. It impacts the physical health (*cardiovascular conditions, lung conditions*) as well as the mental, economic and social health of the county. The effects of weeks of unhealthy air each year on kids are still unknown. ...For this summer there was good funding from the EPA and Dept. of Ecology. We've done a ton of outreach, distributed over 450 air cleaners, did readiness trainings, plan to put up a sensor network billboard and do a social media campaign on outdoor burning. Maurice (*Goodhall, Emergency Management*) used our air quality alert system for announcing air quality episodes or disasters. (21:15) We convened 18 leaders, all of whom responded, to a meeting to discuss this year-round issue and will have a second one to define what to do next year. My goal is 100% clean indoor air. It's 25% now.

CB is surprised that, given the increase in "a-fib" diagnoses, doctors are not informing their patients of the danger from smoke, says a lot of people have learned to "tough it out" as firefighters. **JW:** I discuss it with those who have pre-existing conditions. Dr. Walker gave a presentation to local health centers, let people make their own decisions but when it's dark orange to purple, they need extra protection.

LO asks about tribal participation; LW works with Chris Ray. LJ is waiting for any available Covid funds for fans and filters. LW says grants have run out but is optimistic about collaboration with FYRE and OBHC. MW says her church is financing 49 more sophisticated filters. She will email LW about them.

40:39 - Finances - **LJ:** We help support residents who are isolating and experience a cash flow problem. Dept. of Health has approved Covid money for them. The date for mass vaccination events has been extended one month, no change in amount. *A resolution is passed to apply the same "retention incentive" for employees that has been approved for the County. AH accepts this, considering that pay only increased 3%.*

45:47 - Health Officer Report - **JW:** Like last month, we saw a slight decline in Covid. Five to ten new cases a day of the Omicron BA5 variant, 90/100,000, as low as it's been over the past three to four months, and hospitalizations are 7/100,000. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) - We've broken down some barriers tracking STDs on the reservation, testing and treatment available, good work going on. **LO:** There's outstanding collaboration with the tribes. We've never had so much. **LJ:** Covid created that bond, our ability to work together. **LO:** We have eight homeless to trace, a huge hurdle. Been doing blood drives out in the field. *MW asks about immunization rates with the bivalent vaccine. JW says they have it out, 75% of seniors have had it but only 27% of the 12-17 year-olds. He would like to make it more available, "get it out to folks."* **LJ announces** vaccination events October 14th and 28th at Eastside Park, and the 14th

at the Red Barn in Winthrop. Caravan goes to Catholic churches; Brewster Emergency Medical Services does boosters. LJ says the nurse at the Family Faire has requested Narcan (for meth overdoses). LO suggests taking condoms as well, considering STDs. LJ: We've never seen syphilis like this in all the years I've been here. LO: I saw four homeless in Omak park, all smoking meth. Two were our cases, and they cussed us out all the way to the clinic for treatment.

1:00:17 - Environmental Health - *LG is preparing to build a home on his property for his son, a disabled veteran. He paid for an extension on his permit application, having encountered difficulty getting help with septic system design in a timely manner. The existing system has never failed but the sandy soil, according to MH, requires a pressurized system that would cost twice as much (\$15,000-\$20,000) as the gravity feed set up LG had hoped to install. He was confused by the wording on his application. This same form serves as the building permit once the checklist (design review plus two on-site visits) has been completed. Both application and building permit are extendable for one year but when LG tried to extend what he thought was a permit, he was told it was not a permit, that his application had already been extended and now he had to repay the \$550 application fee. MH said the regulations needed to be abided by but that he would work on getting the wording on the application changed so it would be harder to confuse with the actual building permit. AH asked if there were an unusually high number of applications voided and MH answered that no, despite the current building boom, the numbers were consistent (15 in a two-month period, according to LJ.) JD says that, as a veteran, the son could qualify for aid. AD adds that the county contributes to these funds. LG: Some are 30, 40, 50 years-old. When you ask for assistance—it's a direction they don't want to go. CB mentions the appeals process, says they've had problems in the past with having the authority to overturn rules, but need consistency. MH: When the attorney was involved they had it changed to the Hearings Examiner because the Board wanted out of it. The commissioners are sorry LG misunderstood, and all agree with the need to clarify the application form. LG: People who don't work in your industry aren't going to understand.*

1:39:26 - *MH has received a "pretty aggressive" complaint from an East-side Lake Osoyoos resident about sewage flooding from a neighboring property where there is a mobile home without any permit. MH: As of now there is no sign of an imminent health hazard. The map shows there have been problems in the past. The owner is impossible to get a hold of. There is a well, built afterward, within 65 feet of a cesspit. It hasn't been determined if there is sewage leakage. AH: The lady's complaint is flooding? MH: It was in 2015, 2017, but not in (this?) two-year period. We've proposed that she test... What do we do with a public information request? ...CB asks if the Health district can get a search warrant. MH: There's rotten plywood over the open pit—that's a hazard. CB: Seems like circumstances when something has to be done. That's a push. Got to be a point where we act on complaints. ...AH: Is an open pit illegal? MH: In '70, '72, they were. It was grandfathered in. But there's a danger of falling in. Open sewage would trigger an investigation. ...MH says the way the regulations are written it's not an imminent concern. AH: The only definition of failure is surfacing water. MH: It should be up to the complainant to prove. They are harassing our staff. AH: Take money from the budget and do a test. MH: The complainant didn't do due diligence building the will within 65 feet of the pit. AH: A test would prove it's not contaminated. moving money to mitigate the complaint would be worth it. ...LJ: It would cost less in the long run. CB: I would suggest heading it off.*

1:58:40 - Meeting closed to the public for an executive session (performance of a public employee) and meeting will adjourn after executive session.

