

Okanogan Board of Health
Tuesday, April 12th, 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
James Wright (JW), BOH board member
Mariann Wright (MW), BOH board member
Dave Hilton (DH), BOH, Environmental Health
Patricia Stanton, Okanogan City Council, BOH board member
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member
Jim Detro (JD), County Commissioner, BOH Board Chairman
Andy Hover (AH), Commissioner, BOH board member
Nicole, interested citizen, Health Home Care coordinator

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

Summary of Important Discussions: *State reorganization of Public Health requires revising its charter; Department will get \$48,587 increase from state to improve emergency preparedness, child vaccination rates; Attorney Zimmerman extremely helpful with recent building ordinance discussions but out of county's price range; Commissioner Branch urges board to examine its purpose and appeals process; State audit paints County in a bad light, no wrongdoing, just delays in guidance for unspent funds, media not helpful; Board member sought to represent consumers of Public Health with experience in inequities, all unpaid members to receive \$100 meeting stipend; Covid cases down, flu cases up, avian flu on the move from East Coast; Environmental Health Officer Hilton wants development process more collaborative, not "consumer ping-pong", consensus on necessity of attorney to help with rules and protect the board; Director Jones will regret losing staff member Brian Piper to retirement this month.*

5:07 - Revision of last meeting minutes, Health District re-organization, examining Health Officer's role - **LJ:** After discussion we decided that Attorney Chuck Zimmerman (*Chelan-Douglas County's Public Health attorney, who has been advising them*) will send an example for (*board member*) Jill Gates who will work on the charter with the administrative team.

13:15 - **LJ:** I received an amendment to the January-June Mass Vaccination program (*to promote*) emergency preparedness-response and improve childhood immunity rates. It includes an increase of \$48,587. (*Consolidated contract amendment approved.*)

AH: I got the bills from the attorney's office. They were fairly expensive. Our recommendation is to look for local attorneys and get a price comparison. **CB:** There was confusion in terms of what we had and what we needed. The direction (*given to the attorney*) needed to be clearer as to what his responsibilities were. **JD** *points to the Behavioral Health office:* Their fees are off

the frickin' chart. They could have a couple of extra personnel by not having the attorney at every meeting. **MH:** Was (*our attorney*) billing hourly? For travel? **JD:** Some travel. **AH:** \$310 an hour, plus about \$250 an hour for the assistant.

- 16:44 - **LJ:** Land use is the reason most often (*for using an attorney*). We have someone in mind who knows Okanogan County specifically. **JD:** ...We need someone when there's a big decision **PS:** Is it common to charge for an assistant? **AH:** I've never seen that before...**CB:** It was a good experience. We learned about the governance of a health district... It would be interesting to look into the bills for land use. They would probably scare you to death. (22:10) We decided to hire some of the state's better attorneys... Some things were revealed that were really important. I'd like to carry the discussion forward. **AH:** We have to have an attorney. **JD:** Some of your comments brought to light where we were going down the wrong path.
- 24:17- (The appeals process) **CB:** ...A lot of what you do will never come to light but when it does, it does. In land use I get legal updates. Zimmerman's team is really good at it. But your choice as an administrative team was good. We also need to know our training needs. ...If you have an appeals process (*as in the recent case involving a non-permitted septic system still functioning normally*) it has to be defined, it can't just be a laissez faire sort of thing. Dave (*Hilton*) can take care of a lot of things before coming to the board. ...We really need (*an appeals process*). I think Dave has the ability to waive certain rules... Should it be an option to take one's case to the board? It's something we should explore.
- 30:00 - **LJ:** I hear you saying that in the past, if Dave outlined three options and they're not satisfied, than you could say "You can always go to the board.) ...I really know how, inside and out, he follows the state regulations. **CB** (*to LJ*): If someone came to the board and the board has overturned (*Dave's*) decision, it was against the law, what would you do? **DH:** I'd say if they're not happy with it it's on them to present their case to the board and on the board to rule on my decision vs. their desires. Once it comes to the board for appeal I'm just one side of the equation. (*AH feels the subject was settled, wonders why they pursue it.*) **CB:** ...Our knowledge could be better about what the mission of the board is. Are we on the same page as to why we're even here? **AH:** It seems to me that's when you ask an attorney to join your meeting... At times I've said no, put a hold on (*a resolution*) until the attorney looks at it. Then there's times like what **CB** was talking about... but it's a big chunk of money that wasn't budgeted for.. The Finance Committee will want to make sure we're being financially responsible. (*He repeats his desire for finding someone local and cheaper; CB agrees.*) **LJ:** The attorney for Public Health should be more than the running of the agency, doing things right, but about protecting the board too. I'm with **MW**. Once we get a full board, that's something that the board can recommend.
- 35:24 - State Auditor's report and the media's reaction - **AH:** So they finally finished up the federal audit for the County. Got a finding for not checking that all CARES funds were spent in the time frame they told us... Now the Health Department has that unspent money and we need to get it back into a restricted County fund until we can figure out where to give it back. We're waiting on the state. **MW:** Is this specific to the BOH? **AH:** Okanogan County. We got a finding for our accountability. We allocated money to Public Health for services and Public Health was getting money from the CARES Act from State Public Health as well as from us. When it all came out in the wash there was county money that didn't get spent (*by the deadline*). **JD:** But the media's jumped in and said that it's disappeared. (*The Omak Chronicle article actually said "The sub-recipient did not spend the money and did not give it back to the county or the granting agency, according to the report."*) **LJ:** They made it sound very nefarious when there's been no wrongdoing. **AH:** We knew after December there was going to be some money that had to be given back. Laney (*Johns, Commissioners Board Clerk*) asked

what to do with it and they said ... we could actually – **MW**: retro-actively assign it to that (*inaudible*). **AH**: I said I was uncomfortable going that direction because I did not want to go through another year of audit and not have this money spent when it was supposed to be. **JD**: It was a constant guessing game because every week they would move the goal post, change the rules... **CB**: We became a granting agency. It's not the forte of the County. If you have a lot of experience you know you have to monitor the spending, the time frames. Community Action ten ears ago ran into a crunch like that... The state gives you enough rope to hang yourself on... but the devil is in the detail, and there were certain details that were accounting issues. We are even considering for the ARPA (*American Rescue Plan Act*) funds hiring a third party to actually manage the distribution... **LJ**: Why aren't you given some credit for not just willy-nilly spending public funds?

40:58 - **JR**: The media wants to run down a rabbit hole... Look at Stevens county (which unseated three commissioners, one had the case overturned in Supreme court and got re-elected). That money was allocated properly... Ruined two political careers. It was all media guys who destroyed that whole deal. **AH**: When Laney and me as Chairman of the Board and Cari (*Hall, County Auditor*) were going through the exit interview for this, the State Auditor had something written. I said "That's not what happened." ...The said, "We can (*get it changed*)."

LJ: Why didn't they get it right on the Spokane news last night? So, (*to MW*) those were unspent funds. (*Motion carried for Public Health Department to send a check back to the County for the unspent CARES Act dollars. They talk more about how they had been waiting for guidance on the money, and how long the state took.*) **AH**: After awhile you want to... let Commerce figure out what to do with it. *AH asks how it got on KHQ and JD complains about the journalist*: She was convinced that I had the money. I finally said I d a final payment on my leer jet, and she hung up on me.

47:35 - Board member application process - **LJ**: We're short a board member from the private sector. MW and JW want to see this through the new Board restructuring... I have not heard yet who the American Indian Health Committee will appoint; we have nothing to do with that. We need a consumer of Public Health... who (has had) significant health iniquities or lived experiences with Public Health-related programs. ...We would like the board to approve having a fill-able form created that we can send to the media and put on our web page to see who's willing to apply... (*offering*) a stipend per meeting for non-paid board members. It's been difficult to get members in the past because it conflicts with a normal work day... **MW**: Something like that is important for equalizing the playing field. Otherwise it limits the number of people able to apply. (52:22) **AH**: The trend is \$90. **LJ**: ...The applications go through a process of recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. **CB**: The advertisement should include the fact there's a stipend... *He talks about a state-set rate for gas costs. LJ wants to add minimum wage.* (1:04:10) *MW moves that the stipend be \$100.* **PS**: I'd feel guilty taking it. **CB**: You don't have to take it. At a government meeting, you don't sign the form and you don't get it. **AH**: I want to make sure Tran-Go does \$90 for all board members within the county. Do we need to rewrite the bylaws? (*CB will check.*) I would rather pay the stipend as soon as possible. Should have been done a long time ago. (*Motion carried for \$100 stipend, effective immediately.*)

1:09:19 - **LJ**: No Health Officer's report, as Jim Wallace is at a three-day WASAPHO (*Washington State Association of Health Officials*) conference (*half paid-for by the County*).

Community Health report - **LJ**: Our case rates are down... I met with the City of Okanogan on the homeless issue... Variants are in the back of our heads as we begin to see some increase of cases on the East Coast. VA2 has faster transmission than Omicron. We have a lot of flu bugs. Most cases are currently on the east side of the county. We're gearing up for avian influenza.

PS: Several million birds have already been killed nation-wide. **LJ:** ...If you're going to get a turkey, get it now before the prices go up.

1:14:37 - Environmental Health report - **DH:** For parking lot security (*in the new complex*) we've purchased three covers for the newest rigs. They lock up when the tailgate is locked. We're running into some issues with development, getting a lot of referrals, some out of other agencies we really shouldn't be receiving until we get some questions answered. I'm re-directing. ...The development process, building permits...not going smoothly. We need a development plan for better coordination to do that, what was in the past labeled as a PRC (*Project Review Committee*) meeting including representatives from Building, Planning, Health, occasionally surveyors or someone from tribal organizations, and the proponents if they chose to be a part of it. We tried to get the players on one track instead of playing "consumer ping-pong". We review any land development: short plats, long plats, mining site plats, CUPs occasionally, and individual sites we need further discussion or clarification on, for example, if you're encroaching on wetlands or the water, just for determination that you've met the setbacks and have room to do the development that you've proposed. Projects are on the agenda but so far it is just general discussion to fix what's not working. **MW:** That's a great idea. (*The others agree.*) **DH:** We're going to try it again and see if we can keep it running.

1:10:25 - **LJ:** I'd like to acknowledge the retirement of Brian Piper. He never talked above you, he talked to you. He was part of the original Dislocated Worker Program after the mill shut down. Instead of moving his family out of the county he got a nursing education, MW was his instructor. It is a big loss to me. He has been my go-to person for communicable diseases... going to be hard to replace. (*They make plans to honor him. AH recommends they get a review process in place for candidates with a rating system, and a questionnaire, and that they be ready to give a recommendation by the June BOH meeting.*)

1:27:00 - *Meeting adjourned.*