

**Okanogan County Board of Health (BOH),
Tuesday, April 13th, 2021, 1:30 PM**

"These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer via ZOOM. 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:

Laurie Jones (LJ), Community Health Director
Dave Hilton (DH), Environmental Health Director
Dr. Jim Wallace (JW), Public Health Officer
Eric Johnson (EJ), Executive Director, WASAC (from Olympia via Zoom)
Luke Davies, Chelan-Douglas Health District Administrator
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1, BOH member
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3, BOH Chairman
Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2, BOH member
Mariann Williams, BOH
Jim Wright, BOH
Patricia Stanton, Okanogan City Council member
Jill Gates, Okanogan Co. Public Health

Time stamps refer to Zoom recording.

Summary of Important Discussions: *Increase in new landowners, people moving away from the I-5 corridor; Conconully threatened with fines because the well which serves Red Rock Saloon is within 100 ft. of sewer line; To prepare for BOH Workshop, Guests EJ and LD give input on administrating public health, agree on importance of knowing the population, being able to find qualified staff; LD and AH offer funding and resource sharing ideas; LJ and MW give examples of collaboration between county entities during the vaccination process; More discussion on recruiting: internships, WVC, increased wages.*

14:30 - LJ: Through three different funding streams Covid funding (has been extended by) \$852,993. If you want to thumb through...codes are constantly changing. We must be driving the auditor crazy.

17:50 - (DH): There's a massive influx in new residents (compared to last Spring). "Governmenting" (permit granting?) has gone through the roof. Housing at a premium, grounds are virtually impossible to find. Prices are sky high. It's county-wide.

20:30 - DH was told by Environmental Health Eastern Regional Manager for Drinking Water that the Red Rock Saloon's well, dating from the 1930's, is too close to Conconully's septic system (built in 1908). Although the water is tested monthly, the town was told to move its sewer line or install a \$35,000 chlorination system (which it cannot afford) to avoid being fined \$3,000 a month. JD: A very simple solution would be to hook (the Red Rock) to the city's water. DH: Sure. Does Conconully have a public water system? AH: Well, they don't. JD: Red Rock and (the city) could file for historical status. AH: Could they do UV treatment? DH: I'll talk to Dorothy (Tibbetts, Eastern Drinking Water Operations?) and see what options are out there.

27:00 - Guest input - LJ has invited EJ, head of the association of counties, former commissioner and health board member, and LD, new to the region and in “an interesting situation” in Chelan-Douglas counties, to speak to the board as part of a “pre-strategic planning session. EJ describes dealing in the ‘80s with contentious issues such as needle exchange, family planning, exposed waste water lines leading to mass relocations. 37:40 - His BOH had to learn “the underbelly of the underserved” and to be “not caretakers but leaders.” Had difficulty “recruiting and retaining qualified staff in a competitive market.”

41:00 - LD who worked in Namibia and on earthquake relief in Haiti before coming here says in rural counties “we take care of each other”; he echoes the problem of finding qualified staff. “We’re struggling to (fill out) our incident management team... We’re not only competing against each other but with King Co. employers who pay to work remotely.” Stresses importance of paying competitive wages and collecting data to “know our population.”

49:55 - Listener: I hear the questions, but what are the answers? LD: Identifying where the gaps are, bringing in (those who) can handle them. EJ: Do exit interviews. Who are we losing people to? Look at overall conditions beyond wages and benefits (such as) recognition. AH: You talk about competition with “for profit” (employers) but we are not for profit...County provides less than 10% of Health budget, funding depends on grants... We spend \$1.1 or \$1.2 million on public defense, that’s a big thing for WASAC, but we could put money into other things. JD: Okanogan County has 487 cannabis licenses and we get \$40,000. CB: It’s a struggle to get legislators to realize (they haven’t) produced much.

1:01:32 - LD proposes sharing resources among Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Grant and Okanogan counties for grant writing, monitoring to be able to assess results and cost effectiveness; sharing an epidemiologist between his counties and Okanogan; is now “looking at hiring two people plus three more in common.”

1:05:35 - LJ: During this pandemic...the biggest benefit is our community partnership (mentions Josh Thomson, Pete Palmer, Dr. Wallace). We all need each other. (Without) the Tribes, EMS, Mid Valley, Three Rivers, Family Health Centers, Confluence, we would have been so up a creek... We pulled Environmental Health into this because we didn’t have the staff... Now everyone knows who they can count on. (Asks MW to describe collaboration for mass vaccinations)

1:07:50 - MW (retired from Confluence, now Nurse Practitioner, Home Health and Hospice) describes volunteering at vaccination site, North Valley’s role as only hospital able to store Pfizer vaccine, Mid Valley’s in mixing vaccine, EMS in scheduling, Public Health planning events, people for giving the shots, processing and calling when doses left over; events held at North Valley, Oroville HS... “things went fairly seamlessly,”

1:10:40 - JW talks about all working toward common goal of opening things up again...

1:32:00 - AH comes back to topic of recruiting for Public Health. Ideas include flexible funding so new workers can begin by working alongside the ones retiring, internship programs. LJ: Close the gap (between public and private salaries). AH: Don’t want to rob Peter to pay Paul. (More discussion of grants,) JR: The grant goes away, the person goes away; using the “Wenatchee Valley College Pipeline; (1:54:45) MW reads the Public Health Charter, says “survey the metrics.” AH: As starting point say “this is what we have now,) LJ: I can say what we need but,, when a secretary makes more than my nurse of 17 years.... AH: Increase the wage to attract the caliber... Choose something consistent.

2:01:33 - Meeting adjourned