

Okanogan Board of Health
Tuesday, September 13th, 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 Wright (JWr), 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
Dean Richardson, Okanogan Behavioral Health
Quail Orr (QO), Tribal Community Health Representative
Beth McIntyre, Attorney
Edward Dosset
Miss Jackson
John Schappman, Director, NCACH (North Central Accountable Community of Health)

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

Summary of Important Discussions: *Facing hiring difficulties, unable to offer bonuses, Health Director Lori Jones proposes paying additional 5% of salary over four years to retain staff, using American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds, Hover to get State Auditor's ok; big Public Health Seminar benefited board members, January workshop envisioned for strategies to meet service needs, partner with tribes; Health Officer reports current smoke conditions dangerous for sensitive people, box filters available through Okanogan River Airshed, Covid declining, and settlement money to mitigate effects of opioid abuse; Brewster begins wastewater surveillance program, other cities could benefit from State-provided training; director pro-active about assessing post-Covid funding sources.*

Meeting starts with a half-hour executive session about possible litigation.

2:16 - *AH mentions an independent investigator for possible policy violations. (This may have something to do with the state audit last spring.)*

4:02 - **AH:** How long are we paying Douglas Co. for Covid testing? **LJ:** As long as it's daily. Until the 31st. *Amendment to Consolidated Contract is approved to correct errors in the language. LJ says ARPA (American Rescue Plan) funds are provided by the county to be used at their discretion, mentions national staff shortage. LJ: We can't offer bonuses but we can afford a one-time incentive to retain staff. We've been advertising for staff for over a year... If*

the salary is about \$55,000 a year, a \$250 per month increase for retention could be spread over the next four years.

- 11:57 - *AH wants to make sure this 5% raise is a “discretionary” bonus, without benefits, wants State Auditor’s approval.* **AR:** With ARPA we’re allowed to pay for government services. I’m comfortable with that... **CB:** The Commerce Department got involved when there was a complaint about ARPA (*spending*); it has to do with record-keeping. WSAC (*Washington Association of Counties*) got involved. We’ve asked Commerce and the State Auditor to clarify.
- 16:16 - *LJ, CB and MW attended a Public Health seminar in Spokane. CB reads from MW’s written report: 100 health workers attended. It covered ...services, roles of boards, statutory authority governing tribal people, impacts of these boards on the community.... CB agrees with her conclusion that having a retreat/workshop in January or February to acquaint the new commissioner with the Board of Health, define the role of the Board and ”...strategize over perceived gaps in needed services.” CB: A lot of county commissioners were there, some representatives of ACH (regional health communities) There was a lot of benefit pointed out in partnering with tribes on various issues.... The conference was well worth it.*
- 18:32 - *Someone (Probably ACH director JS) says he’d like to get together with MW to discuss their roles beyond “signing papers and moving them around.” LJ asks tribal health worker QO to speak on past collaboration with the tribes. She mentions during her 20 years of health work serving the nuclear family, whether all tribal members or not, and “making tribal health and Public Health more united.” QO: Covid brought us together a lot. (Brief pause in the recording.)*
- 21:42 - **CB:** Dr. Chen (*State Health Director*) talked about including Public Health in the Comprehensive Plan, something I believe in... He took time to answer a question I had. LJ: He’s responsible for a million people but he’s one person who asked how I was doing.
- 23:40 - Health Officer’s report - **JW addresses air quality issue:** A lot of people in the clinic with burning eyes, cough, sore throat. Some even have irregular heartbeat and chest pain, lung disease, susceptibility to pneumonia. An uptick of activity in the Emergency Room, even 6-8 weeks after exposure. Usually the smoke rating is 0-50; now it’s 51-100, unhealthy for sensitive groups... We’re starting to create clean air spaces in libraries. Schools are filtering better. Liz Walker (Okanogan River Airshed Partnership) has been distributing box fan filters. They still have a supply, if you know someone who can use them. Covid cases: 5-15 a day but coming down. 122 per 100,000 is higher than state average and there are still hospitalizations but there’s not an over-run. We’re talking about getting vaccine events going for the bi-valent booster. Schools have adjusted guidelines a bit, are generally keeping kids in school for their social and mental health. Opioids are always on my radar. With some of the settlements through the state there are funds to take advantage of to prevent overdoses, support people in recovery. Monkey Pox: one case each in Grant and Kittitas counties; 500 in the state but new cases decreasing... *He mentions the detection of polio in wastewater in New York, and one case there of paralysis but no indication of cases nearby. He affirms efforts to find quality employees for the department, then invites questions.*
- 37:06 - **PS:** There a lot of people suffering from fatigue, lack of sleep, physical weakness. Maybe the smoke has something to do with that? **JW:** Smoke certainly worsens that. I chose the wrong day for a bike ride. Smoke wears you out quickly. *He recommends checking with a health care provider since there can be “tons of reasons” for fatigue.* **JW:** My patients all have

fatigue, persistent cough. It can even affect the immune system. I'm talking with other doctors to learn more.

39:30 - Community and Environmental Health updates - **LJ**: Everyone passed their health inspection at the County Fair. I took a complaint about someone hauling garbage up Mt. Hull area. We're looking at that. Brewster is the first city to begin to monitor their water system for Covid, Polio and opiates. *She is concerned about the ending of the state of emergency for Covid and has had a budget with projected funding drawn up to present to the legislature.* **PS**: With the stuff we're finding in wastewater, should we buy bottled water? **LJ**: No, unless you like spending money on it. **PS**: I'm thinking about wells. **LJ**: They can get us to test for them. **LO**: On the wastewater, who's doing the testing of it? **LJ**: The Dept. of Health and the Dept. of Ecology are going to work on that. And the training—I was going to reach out to Omak and Okanogan to receive the training they're going to provide. They're doing it in a lot of counties and it's really beneficial.

44:00 - *Meeting adjourned.*