

Okanogan Board of Health
Tuesday, September 14th, 2021, 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 (majority via Zoom):

Lori Jones, BOH Director
DR. James Wallace (JW), Health Officer
Patricia Stanton, board member
Marianne Williams (MW), board member
Dave Hilton (DH), BOH, Environmental Health
James Wright, board member
Jessica Kuzma, board member
Chris Branch (CB), Commissioner, board member
Jim Detro (JD), Commissioner, board member
Rochelle ___ (R), community member
Isabelle Spohn (IS), Methow resident
Heather Findlay (HF), Okanogan resident
Marcy Stamper, Methow Valley News

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

Summary of Important Discussions: *"Frustrated health supporter" resents a group's disinformation campaigns; LJ explains divergent state and county death counts; grants for employee wellness campaign and for child immunization--most are behind on their shots; new Covid cases among highest in country, impacting normally available services, increase in long-haulers' syndrome; Okanogan sixth grade closed down; uptick in testing.*

3:43 - Public Comments - JW: I received an email from Rochelle ___: (She is present but lets him read her comments.) 1) We have over 5,000 guest workers. Will our vaccination rate go down when they leave the county? 2) ...Concerning "Medical Freedom" groups, they're not about freedom, they're about a need for attention. I know some and we're p___ed. Disinformation needs knocking down. 3) How can we help? LJ: Anything to add? R: No. Sorry I'm not being temperate. I'm a frustrated health supporter. **(8:21)** IS: I want to *thank CB, Mo Udall, LJ and Naomi Peasley for getting funding for last minute mitigation for the fair*. I think having it was a bad idea. Masks should have been required. But fans and washing stations may have saved a life. *Someone asks that health info be posted on Twitter and not just Facebook,, asks why county's reported death rate (41) is different from state's (48), and would like to see positivity rates listed*. LJ: We look at vital records so if death is outside county we don't list it until we see a death certificate. *JW addresses second concern:* the challenge is that we'd have to move from counting all positives to counting all tests. That would take resources away. *CB brings up R's earlier question on impact of guest workers on vaccination rate. LJ says they're dispersed over four counties but most are here and will stay around.*

16:00 - MW: We've applied for a Wellness grant for employees, with activities and rewards, and it's fully reimbursed by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Act), as are the mass vaccination

sites. *Vouchers are approved.* (2:06) LJ: We have a small DOH grant to impact child vaccination rates. Most school age children are behind; didn't have Child Well checks last year. Had meeting with school nurses today Certain parts of county are good, others not so much.

23:27 - LJ: Health Officer's contract ammended because Enduras (health insurance) doesn't cover liability for non-county employees. He will receive a raise in salary and be considered as a county employee.

33:26 LJ: Kris Erlandsen resigned from the board, is busy. There's a place to fill. JD: The title? LJ: From an Okanogan industry, related to public health - could be pretty much anything. Have to advertise. ...*CB says there shouldn't be more elected officials than non-elected on the board.* LJ: WASAC is doing a review of House Bill 1152 (consolidating health departments), set for 2024. We have to be in compliance for 2024. I think we fit the bill.

44:39 - CB: Part of WSAC (WA State Association of Counties)'s order is you wouldn't have a virtual meeting if everyone wasn't virtual because not everyone can see what's going on. It can't be called a public meeting.

45:43 - Health Officer update - JW: Highest rate since March. 1,200 new cases is a high for the country, impacting hospitals and regional referrals, EMS, testing, regular check ups and care. I'm impressed with our three really strong hospitals. ...We're taking steps to expand testing to reduce the transmission. Monoclonal antibodies can be administered in a safe way to decrease hospitalization and death but not a silver bullet; it's resource-intensive. Seeing more and more long-hauler syndrome. ...Appreciate LJ's contact tracing, working around the clock on a shoe-string budget.

LJ: We've been working with several fire teams, got a letter of congratulations. We feel proud. We worked with Lifeline to make sure firefighters were safe. *Regrets the case of one who didn't respond to her calls and died of Covid after being sent back to his home state; six are isolated now but doing fine.* (53:09) Okanogan School District made its own decision yesterday to close sixth grade because of cases among staff and students. We're working closely with school nurses, and with the Tribe. *HF asks how long it will be before they know of any increase due to the County Fair.* It was a different crowd from the Stampede, no beer garden... We'd know within a week. Food inspectors recommended food vendors to wear masks. Compliance was much better Friday.

58:42 - DH: With days cooling down we have our annual fall rush, a lot of them couldn't work during the fires, now they're putting in septic and water systems, and parts and pieces are hard to find. Don't think the Barter Faire is happening, no advertising yet and it's a month away...

1:00:34 - Testing - LJ: Lifeline will be stepping up on PCR (Covid) testing five days a week. Confluence's drive-through getting too busy. Lifeline will help with the overflow. CB: Mid Valley is testing people with symptoms - LJ: or directly exposed. We have Air Methow testing on weekends and Tuesdays and Thursdays, Brewster EMS testing seven days a week and doing vaccinations, and now North Valley Hospital, and Three Rivers. It was extremely busy this past weekend.

1:03:50 - Meeting Adjourned.

BOCC 3:00

CB and JD in the presence of Clerk Lanie Johns met briefly to approve minutes, vouchers and EMS vouchers, and to briefly discuss the upcoming purchase of the former Forest Service Building.