

Summaries of Okanogan County Board of Health and County Commissioners' Meetings May 21, 2020

The following summary was taken from notes recorded by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer via ZOOM. Every attempt is made to be accurate. This summary is published at <https://countywatch.org> and is not an official county record of the meetings. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later time, see the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at <https://okanogancounty.org/Commissioners/Minutes%202020/2020%20Minutespage.html>. For Public Health Board approved minutes, see <https://okanogancounty.org/ocph/BOHMinutes.htm>.

Board of Health: 10:00 AM

Approval of Application for modified Phase 2 status: The Okanogan County Board of Health approved by unanimous vote **Resolution #2020-03**, which approves the County's application to Washington State for partial Phase 2 Status within the State of Washington's re-opening plan. This proposed status includes modifications to Phase 2 status, as recommended by Public Health Officer John McCarthy. A major modification is that restaurants are not yet ready for opening and are currently "curbside only." This includes establishments that are restaurant/bar combos. The county still wishes to restrict gatherings, even if only in restaurants; therefore we are not ready for a full Phase 2. The possibility exists that restaurants could be opened as early as next week, depending upon future data.

Rationale: The County is not yet ready for gatherings over 5 individuals, but wants to get businesses up and running. One issue is the increased cases over the past 2 weeks. 11 of the last 19 cases were from one extended family. It encompasses 3 households, and "4 of those" are coming out of isolation over the weekend. The case count will go downward on paper, but the state is not looking for that. The state is looking for no more than 10 cases per 100,000 in a 3-week period. We would have to have 4 or fewer cases within two weeks. We still have the current outbreak in the Brewster area; it is well-contained and isolated. Everyone has been compliant. Contact tracing has been done, and employers are very much aware of needed support. The county is comfortable moving forward with this application.

Argument and supporting letters: It is anticipated that the application, complete with data, graphs, and letters of support will be finished and sent out today by the Board of Health; it is hoped that it will be approved by the State of Washington tomorrow. (Friday, 5/22/2020.) Although Okanogan County is not yet in compliance with the current requirements for Phase 2 status relating to restaurants, Director Lauri Jones has conversed with the Secretary of Health and he understands that we are a county of large geographic dimensions, with much open space, and with a low Covid-19 case count. The hospitals state that they are capable of doing much more than they are now doing, and that if the county's case count doubled they would be able to handle that.

Letters of support to be included with the application are: Mid-Valley Hospital, North Valley Hospital, Three Rivers Hospital, Jesus Hernandez (Family Health Centers), Lael Duncan of Community Action (assists with isolation and quarantine), County Sheriff Hawley, and many

citizens who own small businesses. Countless letters from businesses included how they could open safely. There is a "small army" of professional health volunteers, largely from the Methow Valley, to do contact tracing. It is not anticipated that any National Guard nor Department of Licensing personnel will be needed or used. Yakima County was overwhelmed and had to have that kind of support.

Rejection Possibility: In the event this application is rejected, Public Health feels that within the next 2 weeks, provided there are no cases over the calculated rate, we should be in good shape to move to Phase 2. Director Jones hopes the Secretary of Health will work with us.

Post Script: Jones indicates that some folks on the Economic Alliance kept looking in a recent meeting for Public Health to be the regulator, but Public Health is not. Public Health is only advisory. People are frustrated with this. **Dr. McCarthy** states that the bottom line is: We are not ready.

Meeting adjourned at 10:33

Okanogan County Commissioners: 11:00 AM

In a meeting following the Board of Health meeting at 11:00, the County Commissioners unanimously approved Resolution #62-2020 in support of the above application. It is to go out right away, signed by all three commissioners.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10.