

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, November 29th, 2022, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Leah McCormack (LM), Treasurer
Cari Hall (CH), Auditor
Lisa Schreckengost, Assistant Auditor
Roni Holder Diefenbach (RD), Director, Economic Alliance (E.A.)
Todd McDaniels, Omak City Manager
Kurt Danison, Okanogan City Planner
Chris Johnson (CJ), Methow Salmon Recovery, Okanogan City Planner
Misty Ruiz (MR), Finance Director and City Clerk, Brewster
Charles Short (CS), District Court Judge
Darlene Schreckengast (DS), District Court Administrator

Time stamps refer to the time on the wall clock. An AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date is available at: https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php

Summary:

- *Economic Alliance members debate going from redistributing rural development funds of among county, city and "emerging opportunity" projects "40-40-20", to supporting large scale, well-planned building projects to be "spread around the county"; people need to know the loans and grants available to them; bonding, policing, mental health, and housing discussed.*
- *District Court will not replace 2nd probation officer in 2023 in order to cut costs. Therapeutic court probably eligible for opioid settlement money.*
- *Tunk Moratorium extended for 60 days*
- *Resolutions passed concerning salaries, overtime, minimum wage*
- *A-19 voucher distribution for Fire District #6's hydrant project approved. Fire District 6's request for ARPA funds to cover cost overrun for new Fire Station will be discussed Monday, December 5.*
- *Difference of opinion on whether a department head should notify when buying small equipment.*

1:30 - *BOCC approves \$22,500 toward Juvenile Court salaries and wages. A question about the U of W stipend, LM announces there is \$856,894 presently in the Bond Fund.*

Budget. Lake Management District - *The district, administered by the BOCC, will receive \$66,899 from the Regional Weed Board for work carried out by the Noxious Weed department.*

They will need a budget supplemental since they are over budget but CH says there is cash in the fund.

- 2:30 - Economic Alliance meeting - **RD**: Today we're here to talk about process. **KD**: We should celebrate our success. **JD** (to *TM*) : Your bridge got fully funded. **TM**: It's DOT (*Dept. of Transportation*)'s bridge. (*Omak's bridge is scheduled to get widened.*) ... **RD**: I did a basic overview of .09 tax dollars received (*.09% deducted from required taxes and devoted to rural development*), which the County bonded. The Economic Alliance gets a lot. (*Between 2001 and 2021 \$3M has gone to cities, \$2.8M to counties \$480,000 to Emerging Opportunities, \$1.2M direct support to Economic Alliance*). ...**AH**: We're putting out less than the revenues going in. Leah says on-line sales tax is through the roof. **MR**: Sales tax is different. Everyone is receiving more.
- 2:46 - **RD**: Changes to the code (*for eligible .09 dollars use*) include the post of workforce housing facilitator. Now funds are confirmed through July 2032. ...**CB**: Legislation is still on the table. **RD**: To go for 50 more years. Since the Public Works Trust Fund (*prior to .09 dollars*) financed the East Lake Sewer Project, opportunities have been funded but not big ones. As for the procedure, the 40-40-20 split (*40% county, 40% city, 20% emerging opportunities*), does it still work? Or another process? That's where we are today, having the E.A. facilitate prioritization. **AH**: I want something bigger. How, in a responsible way, can we get the "biggest bang for the buck"? **KD**: We could bond it. Most projects are hundreds of thousands of dollars. With \$1M a year, bonding (*would let this multiply*). **CJ**: I don't know if the (*40-40-20*) process is understood. ... Bonding assumes there are "shovel ready" projects. The idea of having a reserve for emerging opportunities is not possible if we bond. **AH**: Use 80% for something but keep 20% (*in reserve*). ...We need to spread (*the spending*) around. **MR**: If we choose the top five projects, no one's ever going to get (*inaudible*). **RD**:: We need to break down who's gotten what and find where the gaps are. I do a workshop that explains this fund... I've be begging people to get on this list.
- 3:09 - **KD**: We all know to have real money to build projects we have to have ready-to-build plans. Or do the last bit of a big project. **MR**: ...We should have two lists, one for the community development projects that aren't eligible for .09 dollars. We need to set aside money for feasibility studies and strategic planning. **CJ**: It's a challenge... to have the metric for how to assess these projects. (3:09) **AH**: We have a bond where \$250,000 is going to be freed up for a year. We want to make sure all cities have the opportunity to apply for these funds. Most infrastructure development is going on in cities or expansion areas. The county can possibly (*join the city to*) put in water and sewer.
- 3:22 - **RD**: I'd like to streamline so it's easier at the regional level (*to request funds*). When we did the rankings last year for ARPA (American Rescue Plan) ... a lot of applicants hadn't applied for any loans or grants. **CJ**: ...The idea of a perfect list is not going to happen. ... **RD**: A lot of people don't know who to apply from. **CB** (*to KD*): You're representing the funder and (*inaudible*). **KD**: The Rural Development Council developed teams. We sent people the 2-page application and worked with them. It wasn't as intensive. **CB**: We had a free-for-all. Anyone could be part of projects... It turned political.
- 3:30 - **AH**: ...We should be based on yearly income: you have 2 months to bond, to finish an infrastructure project. **CB** agrees, *points to success of bonding for Stampede arena*. **KD**: We don't even know what the biggest project is. **AH**: Housing. If you could put in 100 houses you could solve a lot of problems. **KD**: There are a lot of caviats. Like to be a non-profit. **RD**: The County would have to submit applications. **CB**: We've got to have a development plan. ...**MR**: Brewster collaborates with the Housing Authority. (*Earning no more than*) 120% of median income is a requirement for fund eligibility. There was extra money for farm worker housing. The problem

with Brewster was that all didn't qualify. **AH:** Say to developers, "20% of housing has to be this category." **KD:** Some entity must be responsible for it. Even if we built all the infrastructure, they'd still build a \$200,000 house. **CB:** You've got to make sure you have projects in place. **KD:** I agree, housing, but think about— **CB:** What if it's a need, like the Omak airport. Housing could be part, as an auxiliary project. **RD:** Some of those (.09) dollars could be a match to get that loan. ...There are lots of funding sources. ...Like a 1% loan... We need to make sure communities know they're available. And they don't have the capacity to write for the grants.

3:43 - **CJ:** ...We have a lot of people who don't want to play by the rules. **RD:** We had a meeting with law enforcement. Businesses are leaving because they can't operate. **CG:** Is that "Emerging Opportunities"? **AH:** We usually have four to five Sheriff's staff on the job. Not much for a county of 55,000....**MR:** We have a problem with lack of prosecution. **RD:** We didn't realize before the meeting that they could only prosecute so many people a year. *MR asks if the jail system could qualify for funds. It can't.* **CB:** It's not the solution. **MR:** It could be on the prioritization list. **AH:** We need a new Omak hospital. Someone said to use the current hospital for the mental health facility that we need. **RD:** Legislation is being discussed. Law enforcement has been hamstrung. They just need three to four words added (*to laws*) to allow them to arrest people. **CJ:** I think it's not about policing but avoidance. If we had a facility it would help more than more prosecution. **AH:** Look at the city park, drugs, complaints. Drugs aren't a crime anymore. **JD:** (*If nothing changes*) business owners are going to take the law into their own hands. (*He says he'd use a baseball bat.*) **RD:** The discussion comes down to we can't have more police without more housing. Someone says "you need a big business." But there's nowhere to live. *AH encourages people to attend the meeting about the jail next month to know how much it's costing. RD says to be aware that the forms for .09 dollars in 2024 should be submitted by October 2023.*

4:00 - District Court Budget - **AH:** We need to know how we're going to fund Probation next year... **CS:** We thought we'd try as a band-aid to make it through until next year, hold off on filling the second probation officer position. A clerical person splits time between District and Superior Court. It could limit expenses next year. **AH:** Is Therapeutic Court (budget) all done? **DS:** We're going to ask some law firms if there's anything unlawful about Therapeutic Court funding a probation officer. *She says funding needed for an employee whose salary has been paid through a grant which will soon run out. They will need a resolution for this transition. CB asks how effective Therapeutic Court is.* **CS:** We're reporting on recidivism; we're not done with the numbers. **CB:** We're looking for areas where opioid (*settlement*) money could apply. **CS:** It could apply. **CS:** It could.

4:20 - *It is mentioned that the 70% of the Public Defender's salary is paid for by Therapeutic Court. With LM and CH the BOCC looks at funds remaining in budgets for Affordable Housing (\$78,000) and Homeless Housing (\$249,000). A resolution is passed to extend the Tunk Moratorium for 60 days. Out of \$6.6M in ARPA revenues \$729,482 has been spent, on Economic Alliance, and security cameras for District Court. They discuss yearly bond revenue, \$9,566,564, the \$517,750 yearly interest on the total bond sum, and on which budget page to present this cost.*

Resolutions passed:

- ARPA funds to Okanogan (\$130,000) and Twisp (\$175,000)
- Limiting accumulated sick leave that can be cashed out the following year
- General wage increase of 5% for non-bargaining positions
- Change in pay scale to conform to minimum wage raise
- Change of status of certain overtime exempt positions
- Voucher distribution of \$75,000 for Fire District #6's hydrant project

Discussion of District 6 Fire Station costs increase of \$280,000 due to Covid:

*Andy Hover—So the fire district over there asked for \$280,000 for cost overruns for that building. I was worried about Davis-Bacon rules, but we figured out those don't apply to this money. On Monday, when we go through the ARPA budget, can we look to see how much money we have...
Chris Branch—Let's do that.*

Andy Hover—...and discuss the possible paying for part of this maybe? I don't know. I've had people go both ways. There's a lot of people over there who are like "We need to pay this because we need this station." There are some people who say, "Don't use this money to pay for the station." You know, they're, whatever. (Chris Branch says something here but it's inaudible.) I think we have money left. We just allocated \$400,000 to Okanogan. So, on Monday we can think about doing this.

CB: \$500 was spent by Naomi Peasley on used equipment for the Fairgrounds. Not yet authorized. **AH:** It's okay. **CB:** You do business like that? **AH (to LJ):** What's the policy of when the BOCC needs to be notified of a purchase? **LJ:** No authorization if it's budgeted. **AH:** It could be covered by minor equipment. **LJ:** When the County was really watching cash, the departments were restricted to \$500. *CB suggests one should notify in a case like this.*

5:25 - As no meeting is planned for Wednesday, meeting adjourned until Monday morning.