

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday December 17, 2024, AM**

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC, District 1  
Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2  
Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC Chair, District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ) – Clerk of the Board

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer via Zoom. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. 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:

[https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners\\_proceedings.php](https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php).

Time stamps below are in real time. To locate specific topics, a click on the AV Capture video screen at <https://okanogancounty.org/avcapture.html> can assist in finding the correct spot on the video recording.

Summary of Significant Discussions or Actions:

- Dean Karaff representing organized residents of the Methow Valley that are interested in the Dark Sky (light restriction) & Ridgetop- building prohibition being put into the Comprehensive Plan. There were 130 comments in favor of this during the zoning hearing comment period. This applies to new construction only. We are also in support of an expanded Methow Review District to Pateros, encompassing the entire Methow Valley. Dean Karaff offers to answer any question and is willing to provide a briefing to the BOCC – anything that might help the Board understand the request.
- Annual update from the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Okanogan Tourism Council represented by Jenn Tate and Carolyn Davis. LTAC funding.
- Finance Committee meeting with Auditor, Treasurer, and Finance Manager; Planning for end of the year and 2025 adopted budget going forward. Questions on how to utilize Opioid funding, more discussion on Aeneas Lake Irrigation District need for operating funds.
- Executive Session under 42.30-110.1.d to review negotiations on a contract for 10 minutes, inviting Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer
- Public Works Update: Contractor still working on heaters for new shops. Siding work continues on the Public Works building. Still working on a land swap with City of Okanogan, and advertising the Old Hwy 97 project for 2024 funding. Considering scheduling for snow removal on weekends.

- Planning Director shares revision to the Zone Code based on hearing comments. She runs this by the BOCC who also give input on verbiage. Will start with a Resolution for the BOCC and then, an
- Ordinance for the changes is needed. It is currently in draft form.
- BOCC transfers money from Reserves to fund the 2025 Budget. A letter to be sent to departments for them to live within their budget.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:44

9:00

Pledge of Allegiance

*JN and AH begin the meeting until CB arrives a little late.*

AH suggests that the BOCC send an e-mail to all departments explaining they need to live within their budgets as there is no extra money and they have had to dip into reserves to fund the 2025 budget.

9:04

CB arrives

*The board commences to discuss City Expansion Areas (CEA) and requirements for water rights*

9:15

Public Comment Period:

Dean Karaff, representing a group of Methow Valley Residents that are interested in the Dark Sky (lighting restrictions) & ridgetop building restriction language being incorporated into the new zoning ordinance for the Methow Valley. Mr. Karaff noted there were 130 comments in the recent hearing in favor of this for the Methow, especially Mazama. This applies to new construction only. He is also in favor of the expanded Methow Review District to Pateros going forward. Mr. Caraff offered to answer any question the Commissioners might have and would be happy to give a briefing, anything to help them.

*The Commissioners thanked him for his comments*

CB – brings up the Oroville extended area. JN remembers that it went to levy, I think clear to the bridge. CB believes that he has a map of this in his office. JN reports that they're looking to improve the north end water system.

CB – There were a couple of opportunities to do that, but this is not the right time.

AH – speaks regarding the special provision in Methow Review District, which is only relating to businesses, not residential to keep down the glare from their lights and the need for shielded light. AH – People have been telling me that it is already in code, but it is not for everyone, only businesses.

9:30

Annual update – Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Okanogan County Tourism Council, represented by Jenn Allen Tate (JAT) and Carolyn Davis (CD) CD *hands out a document*

JAT asks the Board what they want to achieve out of this meeting?

AH – What are our goals and update on the funding.

JN – We are growing tourism where this is none now. We have an early winter campaign (in Methow)

for the Cabela's/REI audience.

AH asks how the wooden kiosks are going.

JAT – We have quite a few that are completed; Pateros, Oroville, Tonasket, and Omak. We're also working on a kiosk for Loomis, Mazama, Twisp, Brewster, and the Loup. We are also working at getting one at the North Cascades National Park – we may stop that process. AH is not sure if we can use the LTAC funding for that because it is not on county owned land.

AH – All the LTAC funds are in.

JAT – We are trying to determine the location for the sign in Twisp.

CB asks how they are notifying people about the wildlife areas that are closed in winter. Is that being explained? JAT – We didn't put that on the signs as it doesn't really affect tourism. It appears the areas that are closed for wildlife were used by local people – not tourists. It is not part of the trail system. I see no reason to bring something up that would invite controversy.

AH notes that Big Buck is closed due to wildlife.

JAT – We did a Facebook post about that.

*(There was an Edward Lafferty on Zoom who asked about how to make comments about tourism in the North end of the county. That was never addressed in the meeting).*

AH – Moving forward, we're getting new members on the LTAC board. The goal is to make sure *(inaudible)* You don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

JAT – Sun Mountain has a good inventory all their own.

AH asks what are your thoughts on creating tourism from Brewster North?

JAT explains that Brewster has their Sockeye season that is capacity. The northern part of the County is difficult.

AH asks if there is anything we can do with Air B&B's? Maybe a targeted get together.

JAT – Claire Painter, our contractor, gets information on new places and notifies us.

JN – A couple of comments from the north end; for the tree lighting, the wrong date and time was posted. JAT responds that the time and date had changed a few times, and it was an unfortunate mistake. JN will speak with Angela because that is not how I understood it. I will do a face to face with Angela about promoting the north end. Do you promote ice fishing in Molson?

JAT – We do promote that, but there are problems with internet connection in Molson. We do a lot of promotions of that area. Due to lodging, people usually stay in Omak and go up for day activities.

JAT asks BOCC if the County keeps track of the Air B&B's? AH states that they just need a permit. It's up to them.

JAT discusses how VRBO & Expedia promote a lot of lodging. We could easily create a link for Air B&B's.

JN is unsure how many there are in the north county. There are 30 on VRBO. JAT- We're trying to get numbers for cards for a data swipe.

AH – Is there a way we can get numbers within a zip code?

JAT – We could give you a spreadsheet.

CB feels that lodging is not the big deal, but developing the product (tourist activities). The people I've gotten acquainted with recreating here are from a long way away. So, just developing the product.

JAT – It would be helpful if Oroville had one point person to contact.

JN – I will track down Angela about the mistake.

JAT – Also, is you do a search for Oroville online, you can easily end up with Oroville, California.

10:13

Finance Committee Meeting with Cari Hall (CH), County Auditor, Pam Johnson (PJ) Treasurer, and Lisa Schreckengast (LS) Finance Manager.

PJ – We've been working on our budgets, and we should be in a holding pattern. The tax parcel we had for sale has sold for \$51,300.00. This was tax title property, not surplus.

AH – Looking at the last budget numbers.

CB wants to know about the Opioid account. Do you know when the different monies have come in? CH and PJ answer that there is no notification when the money is deposited, only the bank flags the deposit.

CB – I'm going to have a discussion with the Carolan (contractor) about this. In our adopted 2025 budget, we'll need to do budget supplementals, but we also have to know when and how to submit application for these funds.

CH – We can run an expense report for that account.

JN – This all originates through the Attorney General's Office

CH – I also wanted to bring up a department re-making payroll. Probation. There will need to be a transfer of funds of \$370,000.00 cash. CH asks who will be initiating the transfer?

10:29

AH to LJ – Does the Chairman of the Board have authority to make decisions when there is no quorum?

AH moves that the Board authorize the Chairman of the Board to work with the Auditor/Treasurer for timely financial matters when there is no quorum. It was seconded and carried.

CH reports that all the department budgets have been entered into the new computer system (Eden)

PJ- We'll be meeting with the Aeneas Lake Irrigation District (ALID) in January about continued use of registered warrants. They are doing a project and are worried about having the funds to complete the project. They'll be needing money for that. They are concerned. I am not interested in having them go on with registered warrants beyond December 2025 – the agreed-upon end date.

JN – It is certainly worth a discussion.

PJ reports the ALID brought in \$443,000.00 in revenue and had expenditures of \$4089,339.00. They are not making enough to cover their expenses. AH states they need a line of credit, but not through us. They are just like a business.

CH – They have been on registered warrants for 3 years, and that is how long it is allowed.

PJ – They will be on extension. Their rates are not the highest rates in the county.

10:48

PJ expresses her appreciation in working so well with the BOCC. CH notes there are counties where the treasurer and auditor don't even communicate. (*To the Board*) – You are all so approachable. You want it to be a group effort.

JN – I think we all want the same result. PJ – We want to do our best for the taxpayers. We are taxpayers too.

10:52

Dan Wolf on Zoom. (DW)

JN – We need to have a discussion on the wells at the fairgrounds. I would like to proceed and do another well. I'm afraid if it delays any longer, we'll run out of time on our grant for this. DW – We're having trouble getting a driller lined up to do the drilling. DW also explains how they are testing the other wells. One wasn't designed well to begin with.

JN – It doesn't appear that it will be completed by June. Expedite as much as you can. We'll be talking after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. LJ states the deadline for using the grant is 5/31/2025.

11:02

Executive Session under WAC # 42.30.110.d to review negotiations on a contract, inviting County Engineer. 10 minutes. \*\*\*\*\*

11:09

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer updates on Public Works.

JT – The Contractor is still working on the heaters in the new shops. Road Conditions – The many roads needing plowing but did not do weekends.

AH has heard some complaints about the lack of snowplowing on the weekends and would like JT to look into scheduling for this coverage. He'll need to figure out the cost for overtime. AH – It is our job to plow snow in the winter.

11:15

JT – The siding is getting done on the Public Works Building. Will also be doing projects with cities and towns. Also, continuing to work on the land swap with City of Okanogan. There are some items on the consent agenda.

JT – I have advertised the Old Hwy 97 project in order to get to use funding from 2024. There is also some upcoming bridge work, possibly using different materials. (lighter). These materials are more focused on how quickly the bridge goes up and lower costs.

11:23

Pete Palmer (PP), Planning Director on changes as a result of comments from the code hearing.

PP – We're just going through the changes. AH thinks it looks really good. You know the Methow Dark Sky Coalition has really gotten people together. PP – I believe I worded it to look at that but have not committed at this point. These revisions are in Okanogan County Code Chapter 7A regarding lighting and ridgetop development, BOCC's commitment to making changes under the penalty section, sub-units by including entire valley in the Methow review District. It covers multi-family dwellings. It also addresses land that is zoned as buildable but now is not. There is also language about possible future changes. JN - & looking at city grown areas (CEA)

CB -Maybe under sub areas of likely growth.

JN – Should we be looking at flood maps? & also cost benefits?

CB –Yes, and countywide projects. Ridgetop development could cause you grief if not done well. So, the motion to approve the zone code, these things will be considered.

AH – We'll need to have an ordinance and possibly a resolution.

PP – I have a draft ordinance that will be ready for the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Do you want me to put together the resolution also? Or LJ?

CB suggests the resolution first - directed toward the future commitment, then the ordinance. PP- We have a Zoom meeting set up for Thursday. We may be able to get this done then.

11:36

JN – How often do you do OPMA (?) CB – You need to have an organized effort so as not to forget to

do that.

11:44

The meeting is recessed until the afternoon session.