

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, September 24th, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

"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:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1 (via Zoom)
Jon Neil (JN), BOCC District 3
Laney Johns (LJ), Clerk of the Board
Stacey McClellanLuis Rodriguez (LR), MJ Neal Architects
Justin Borst (JB), MJ Neal Architects
Cari Hall (CH), Auditor
Paul Budrow (PB), Sheriff
Susan Speiker (SS), Court Clerk
Daniel Higbee (DH), Building Dept.
Dara Schreckengast (DS), District Court Clerk
Kayla Wells-Yoakum (KW), WSU Extension
Josh Thomsen (JT), Public Works
Larry Gilman (LG), Assessor
Tim Meadows (TM), Maintenance
Darla Dolph (DD), Noxious Weeds office
David Rodriguez (DR), Coroner
Shelley Keitzman (SK), HR Director, Risk Pool

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 of Important Discussions:

Bids for Morgue/Sheriff's storage building upwards of \$4M, sewer hook-up to add costs

Architects ready to sound out departments for best combination at former forest service building, possibly auditor, treasurer, assessor, elections; planning, building could share space in to-be-renovated public works building

Grant funds for courthouse to insure disabled access to courtrooms, jury rooms and bathrooms; interior will adopt more historic look; asbestos testing needed

Commissioner Hover announces BOCC consensus that administrator to insure continuity and oversight should be hired

Department heads reports: Dispatch to use AI in transcribing audio, move will off-set rising staff costs – Sheriff faces flack from “anti-coasties” in Tonasket, is collaborating with Omak School District to create Law Enforcement study course; court clerk pursued

by dissatisfied customer, is grateful for security agents; assessor reports big construction year but homeprices at 82% of market;

Commissioners discuss battery disposal, archiving of building project plans, security policy, RV park rentals, and use of opioid settlement spending

Meeting adjourned at 4:14

1:29 - Bid Bond, Sheriff's/Coroner's Building - JN: ...The first (*bid*) up is H.B. Hanson, \$4.98M. *There is an "add on" of \$150,000. There are four addendums.* Next one is Cascade Construction, \$4.31M, alternate is \$140,000. ...Next up is Halme A. Builders. Base bid: \$4.05M, add on is \$150,000. Lastly is Walker Construction, base bid is \$4.38M, add on is \$130,000. *Each bid is accompanied by the four addendums and a contractor list. AH asks LJ to pull up the bond budget. LR recommends contacting the low bidder and asking if there are any concerns with their bid. CB asks LR if MJ Neal had an estimate.*

LJ: The one we published was \$3.8M. Then there was the generator and cancel switch.

AH: Did you do the bidding for the Public Works shops? We either have \$250,000 or \$500,000 of liability left to pay them (*inaudible*). We've got \$5M left... It's about where I figured we were going to be. I was hoping they would come in a little bigger than what I thought and we could bring that down, because we're supposed to be spent out by April... I don't think we will be, but hopefully they can get a move on.

LR: Some stuff to figure out on the task force still for the sets around that. *Someone in the room, the county engineer or building director perhaps, asks about a (sewer?) connection, and is there a game plan for afterwards? More inaudible comments from BOCC and architects.*

AH: I think we're right there, at 4.15; we're up 5.12 with that retainer, not sure what's left of pay on that, those bills that were billed to Public Works...

CB: You're talking about cutting the concrete in the (*inaudible*).

LR: Yeah, and this is without taxes, so on top of this... *Some discussion between CB and MW about the sewer, 10 feet below ground, that has to be extended to the Sheriff's building/morgue.*

AH: Let's just get it done, because there should be enough money in the budget here to get all that stuff done, and that's part of the bond. *CB-inaudible. AH: It's our building so we could technically kick the Drug Task Force (DTF) out (which occupies a building on county property by the morgue), we're never going to do that-*

CB: So why'd you bring it up?

AH: Lifeline had to replace a major sewer line in one of our buildings up there. I don't think we would do that.

CB: I don't know exactly what was our arrangement with the DTF-when we talked about that (*he's answering MW's question*), the implication was that we would charge them for

improvements on a building that we owned... I don't know if we're giving something away or not.

AH: The one thing I do know is that what I heard, is that all that money is *(inaudible)* restricted to buying drugs. *MW doesn't know what their limitations are. CB wouldn't want to delay entering into an agreement with the*

1:47 - MW: I know the task force is willing to pay more for their lease on the building... *It turns out it may be counting on occupying space in the new building. He mentions something about old case evidence storage on neighboring Huston property/"Chicken Creek", which the county's been renting. Talks about an "existing building".*

AH: Do we need a bathroom in that building? *MW doesn't know.* I would say we stub the sewer out so in case, we can connect to it. Now I don't know if we would need to, or what we would do.

MW: My immediate interest for that *(building?)* is that I can move my radio *(inaudible)* upstairs. *(Inaudible.) AH hopes discussion around this doesn't hold up the sewer connection.)*

AH: Let's just stub it out and make an agreement with the city.

CB: ...If we're not going to use the building later on, make sure that's in the agreement.

AH: Would we be better off if it was leveled, and a new building put on the slab, is it structurally okay? There's a lot of things to check before we say "let's cut the slab and put a sewer in."

MW: Because the *(inaudible)* septic is on the west side of the building, and the water supply comes from *(there)* I think we could just cut into existing supply and drain lines *(inaudible)* back into the city, go around those lines to get them in—

AH: Because of how much fall there is. Yes. *Has to be assessed. MW assumes they want him to work on that. They joke about him being the sheriff's works manager.* AH: Realistically I think it working on it means we're stubbed out far enough and that we have agreement with the city that we will connect if necessary within x amount of years. We don't need to do any engineering, just *(have)* nothing in the way of digging a trench. New asphaltting of entrances—*MW says something inaudible.*

CB: The city is asking us to establish the corner of the property... The NW corner.

LR: The city owns that parcel along the river. I guess, from the county's property it would be—

AH: Basically they want us to pay for the surveyor to find their property corner.

CB: Chris *(Johnson, city planner)* has some environmental *(debt?)* on that property, and wants to make sure that was on the property they did it on, because they didn't know where the property line was.

AH: It would be good for us to survey... *CB agrees for "pretty much the same reason". More of MW talking away from the mic, and mumbles from AH. LR says they were counting on getting that surveyed. ...I vaguely remember (Josh Thomsen) talking about*

the limitations because if it's on a project basis, it should be done as an RFP (request for proposal)... LR has asked someone for a proposal, but not a published RFP. AH will question JT. CB clarifies: it's whether or not they have to do an RFQ (request for quote), not RFP.

LR: I guess the idea is to award this as soon as possible and get them for the building constructions. AH is happy there were enough bidders, and that they were fairly close. MW asks who the liaison with the city is. It's CB. JT arrives and everybody laughs. LR answers AH that they count on staying for the department heads meeting. JN announces the start of the meeting.

2:01 - Department Heads Meeting - *LR says he wants to start going through the spaces because of the study they're doing on the Ringhoffer Building (old Forest Service Building on 2nd Ave.), to see what departments could work together, and also the public health building. LR: In these coming days we'll try to schedule meetings by zoom or try to come up (from Wenatchee). He's told the auditor's out of town til the 5th and that it's WACO (Washington Association of County Officials) week.*

AH: Did we come up with a general idea of what that entrance is going to be?

LR: Not much... because we wanted to meet with people. We talked about some options where we had auditor, treasurer, elections—

AH: Assessor, licensing—

LR: And then building and planning. The idea with the Health Department was to make their space work better so it would allow for part of that floor to function for another department.

JB: We were also looking at moving the Health Department into the Ringhoffer building and putting Building and Planning on the upper floor with Public Works but we aren't exactly sure yet what everybody needs... so that will dictate how much space we have and what we can fit in there. *Someone, PB?, points to the merits of the new Fenton County assessor's/commissioners building, universal conference rooms on every floor, out front from the main offices, joint space instead of individual space.* JB: Part of the question is how much individual space can we share with other departments...

2:07 - *LJ tries to bring up a floor plan on the screen. AH remembers they'd designed individual entrances to offices and some that were more of a lobby-type space in the middle, a centralized lobby style. The plan on the screen, Andy says, has too big a lobby.*

JB: This one uses public windows accessed off the lobby. That's one of the questions: is that acceptable or does someone talking to the assessor doesn't hear people talking to the treasurer. *AH says they talked about having basically what the treasurer or auditor have, a rectangular space off the lobby, a smaller customer service space; he reminds people this is very preliminary. They view another plan, more broken up, with more private space. AH says it's broken up with the bathrooms. He likes option B with Building and Planning, Auditor, Elections, Licensing and Treasurer.*

LR: You'd have a central lobby but you'd be able to walk into each department's reception area. Common bathrooms—

CB: I reserve my “likes” for when we talk about it with the departments, being able to see a plan on the table—probably because I don’t see very well. *JB says this plan was made before discussion with departments and now they’re aware there are different needs.*

JN: This gives you something to think about so if you like something... *Heads give their preference between an in-person or zoom meeting. AH talks about exterior renovations at the courthouse, people are pleased. Announces that they’re at the top of the list thanks to LJ for the next round of courthouse renovation grant.*

LJ: This grant is for renovation of the third floor. This was the floor with the least amount of rearranging. *Courtrooms and clerk’s office will stay in the same place, modification to those spaces have been proposed and worked on with judges and architects; more work on details when budget is determined by legislature.*

2:17 - AH: That’s to make the interior look like the historical courthouse...?

LJ: The (*second?*) courtroom has the most ornate features that we want to infiltrate into the other courtrooms. There’s also (*inaudible*), jury room, reconfigurations, bathrooms, the judges’ bench on the south end of the courtroom, there was some idea of hooking that from the east side to the west side, and creating better jury spaces... The superior court has very limited access so that also will be rearranged.

LR: The work would need to be phased, to refinish the halls , do asbestos testing. *AH talks about temporarily moving the court clerk and Judge Short. SS favors other options, says they could use the probation area for a “short window”.*

LJ: This is a two-year grant, 2025 to 2026, for the third floor. The main purpose is ADA (American Disability Act) access, to the jury box, bathroom... Technologies (will get) access.

2:24 - AH: (*Central Services Director Kayla Wells*) showed me (*an estimate of \$150,000*) to do technology in (*one*) courtroom. *LJ says they can get matched funding for projects the county has payed for, including “in kind”, like the work Tim Meadows, Maintenance, has done at the courthouse, and the architects’ design.* AH: We’re getting ready to do budget work sessions. ...With wages going up and budget supplementals eating into our carry-over, t’s pretty tight. (*Hiring*) a county administrator has been brought up. I think we need it. An administrator is going to do a lot of things we currently do— (*We’d*) have somebody outside an elected official. Commissioner Branch is retiring. That’s a loss. It’s going to take a big chunk of change to afford it. Get your budgets and thoughts down so we can talk.

JN: As Chair I’d like to say how happy and proud of you I am. I’ve had very vew things come back to me about what you do. Revenues have not kept pace with wage costs.

CB: Insurance is sky high. The Risk pool is at risk!

SK: Insurance has gone down a little this year.

CB: ...I went to the WSAC (state association of counties) Leaders Conference a few years ago. They (*stressed the importance of*) an administrator position.

AH: We used to be small enough to get by without. Now there are more projects, buildings... Now we have to take the next economic step to look at those things. *talks about the many things retiring Commissioner Branch has been involved with.*

JN: Having *an administrator* would make a lot of difference in the continuity. Keeping us all on track. We've overlooked stuff recently that you kick yourself for that hopefully an administrator would have picked up on. Unfortunately I'm close to perfect but those two aren't. *(Laughter.) CB thanks MW and TM for all the coordination they've done on the renovation projects. They proceed to Department Heads reports:*

Public Works

JT: It was a slow summer but now we have paving projects at the landfill, Mazama. Culvert project on Highway 7 will take most of next month. We're redoing the roof on our building and replacing the siding on the Public Works building.

AH: What are you *(Assessor Gilman)* seeing for labor?

LG: Markets are turning to where people need work.

JT: We're getting more applications for entry level but less for technical positions..

2:36 - Sheriff's Dispatch

MW: We've got building bids *(for the morgue/sheriff's storage building)*, radio projects in the process of a final quote for next spring; we're deploying improvements. *AH wonders how much federal funding they've got.* MW: \$3: in congressionally-directed spending, \$1M from the Legislature. ...Our staffing is good, one open position. Costs for staffing are going up. I'm "tipping my toe" into AI, going to point is at transcribing the audio, "time suck tasks", to identify what we're missing.

Sheriff

PB: All except the jail we're doing well *(regarding staffing)*. We're in the process of starting a program with the Omak School District to teach Law Enforcement. He mentions problems he's having with "a lot of sick people": In Tonasket they're trying to get me voted out because I'm a "coastie", even though I've been here for 20 years.

HR/Risk Pool

SK is still looking for "stand alone" vision coverage to complement public service agency health insurance coverage, and asks those who have the anti-overdose treatment Narcan to turn those in because they've reached the expiration date.

Noxious Weeds

DD: We've started spraying with the tribes.

AH: Are we applying, or helping?

DD: We find weeds, map them out. They hire applicators now. After the irrigation shut-off October 11th we'll have milfoil treatment on the Okanogan River and Spectacle Lake. We got grants for the Eagle Bluff area. *She mentions conferences she and department head Larry Hudson will attend in Montana and in Wenatchee.*

Someone from the Planning office reports that they canceled their last Planning Commission meeting for lack of quorum. Coroner Rodriguez says they're at a new

location by Superior Court. He jokes: "Because of elections, our numbers are way up. MW says the building bids "came in reasonably". AH says wryly that \$4M is not very reasonable.

Court Clerk

SS: The clerk's office is pre-Covid busy. We're hopping. I'd like to thank Shelley (Keitzman) for the security guards. was trying not to be accosted by someone following me. Security is a big issue for us. Problems feel bigger. There's anger at the window. I was ducking behind cars this morning to get into the building. ...We use security guards all the time. They're amazing and wonderful. There;s nothing worse than being scared.

Assessor

LG: It's been the second highest year in construction. We had a lot in the last two years. It may take two years to get it all assessed. ...We're still 82% behind the market.

JN thanks the department heads, they leave. The commissioners go into a five-minute closed session for a union negotiation issue.

3:25 - The BOCC agrees not to oppose the Okanogan County Law Enforcement Bargaining Unit's affiliation with Teamster's Union #160. Discussion about September 10th minutes' reference to shipping small batteries out; JN says nickel, cadmium and newer alkaline batteries can go to the landfill but not the lithium.

AH: Do they have a sorting belt (at the landfill)?

CB: They would if we'd gone to single stream. (Batteries) were going to China but they finally said they didn't want them. That killed a lot of those on the coast because that's all they were doing. We didn't do that. We were opposed to it for quite awhile because we were concerned about it so decided not to go there. At the leadership conference where the solid waste people were there was a lot of crying. It affected some of those jurisdictions that were doing it. ...'Cause I talked to him one time and he said (batteries) can go in the landfill.

AH: We've had a couple fires with lithium batteries.

JN: (Inaudible) punctures them and then they spark.

3:33 - LJ: TBH emailed me for the jail H-Vac design. ...The task order has been signed.

AH: Do we have a repository for plans?

LJ: ...Whatever people hand in we have archived and scanned into meeting minutes... They're kept in paper form, and (the software) Laserfish, and another folder for county property with folders for architects, jail, MJ Neal, with invoices and bills. AJ asks about jail bills; LJ doesn't know if she has them in PDF format. In other business, LJ: I have a fee waver for Loup Loup ski school, a request for (them) to provide their own security for their benefit auction. Waver approved.

JN: I thought we had decided not to exclude anyone from using Pacific Security.

AH: There was a discussion.

CB: There are organizations that functioned for years without the security.

JN: It gets very complicated to choose.

AH: I understand your consternation, I agree with it. We still have a motion on the floor. *They decide to decide what policy to set. AH asks LJ to look up that discussion in the minutes. CB agrees it's complicated, even to limit it to alcohol-serving events.*

JN brings up a change in long-term rental fees at the RV parks. LJ says a resolution was made to adopt an amended fee schedule...

AH: \$5 for a shower?! I want a discussion. *JN says it's a fee if you're not staying there.*

JN: At \$30 a day there's no place around that's cheaper. *They decide reduced rates could be charged for government or "quasi-government" workers. They will discuss it with the fairgrounds manager at the next staff meeting. LJ mentions a construction change order for the horse barn repairs—33 additional exterior posts; this will increase the \$144,000 estimate by \$85,263.*

LJ: Lastly I have an interlocal agreement with the Chelan Regional Diversion Work Group project. ... It defines the responsibilities of the parties.

CB: It has to do with the crisis system and the jail collaboration and the whole nine yards. ...It's not part of *(the opioid settlement money)*.

AH: ...The agreement is we're going to do stuff together and do paperwork together. The Jail is going to use opioid money for that. We need to send a scope of work to Tiffany. *LJ says she thought this was through (opioid settlement administrator) Carillon. AH says the work group Connections gets the buy-off from Carillon on what to spend the money on.*

AH: I'm not opposed to paying from some other source but instead of paying OBHC (*Okanogan Behavioral Health Council*) for all of the mental health, that we pay part of it out of there.

4:00 - CB: I think we should keep it separate... and have the approval of the opioid dollars.

AH: But to get the opioid money to reimburse us we have to send that agreement to Carillon. *CB said the work has been done. Before we sign that we have to know what account it comes out of. They agree to take the money out of OBHC which has an ongoing contract with the county. AH says there is plenty of money, \$110,000, in the contract including \$75,000 of professional services money plus alcohol and drug abuse funds. The revenues come from state property tax. In the end they decide to communicate the amount of the work group to Tiffany (Carillon?) to see if it's an eligible expense.*

CB: There's another proposal I sent you relative to the facility's needs. It hasn't been determined if they can use opioid dollars but it's separate. *AH says he's got to go bale some hay.*

4:14 - Meeting adjourned.