

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

October 7, 2024 AM & PM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, Chair, District 3—via zoom
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, District 2
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
SM—Stacy McClellan, Deputy Clerk of the Board
JT—Josh Thompson, Public Works
NB—Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
TM—Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
CH—Cari Hall, County Auditor
LS—Lisa Schreckengast—Finance Manager
PJ—Pam Johnson, County Treasurer

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note takers comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://www.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

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Summary of significant discussions:

- The commissioners agree to sell a 3.4 acre parcel just south of Carlton on the river to the WDFW. The parcel is completely surrounded by WDFW land and the county has no use for it.
- The Planning Department will advertise an upcoming second round of comments for the proposed zone code changes. Because the Planning Commission is having a hard time forming a quorum, the BOCC decides to run the code change as a legislative change that won't require the recommendation of the Planning Commission. The proposed changes do not affect any particular parcel of land. Instead, the changes will say the county is going to use the permit tracking software system.
- Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor, is moving forward to get a new fire alarm system for the Ringhoffer Building and blinds for the Courthouse windows.
- Commissioner Branch shares his idea that the county could save money on public records requests if it posted more documents online. Commissioner Hover is skeptical and will check with Cameron to see what requests are being made.
- Prompted by an email from a woman in the Tunk Valley, the commissioners discuss well drilling and later road building in the Tunk.
- Through a series of public hearings, the commissioners raise by 1% the amount various levies the county can collect in 2025.
- The commissioners, Cari Hall, County Auditor, Pam Johnson, County Treasurer and Lisa Schreckengas, Finance Manager, discuss the 2024 ending amounts for various budgets in preparation for writing the 2025 county budget.
- Meeting adjourned at 3:40.

-5:06:11—Pledge of Allegiance

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AH—We don't have a whole ton of stuff today. The budget review this afternoon will just be current expense revenue and expenses out of 015, so data we have matches up with what others are thinking. If it doesn't match, it can have a big impact on the bottom line.

AH—I went to the FAC (Fair Advisory Meeting). There was a lot of consternation about it, but it seemed like they were getting things worked out. Charlene is resigning.

JN—I expected that.

AH—So we'll have four open positions. We'll have to talk about it when we're all here.

JN—Maybe be a good thing to have a bunch of new blood.

AH—There were some complaints about the Fairgrounds Office because Larissa was gone for a while, but I think that's remedied.

JN—I've got OCOG (Okanogan Council of Governments) this evening. Anything to throw at them?

AH—CB went to a meeting where Omak presented the infrastructure thing. Was it bringing together a tech team?

JN—Yes. And they had a lot of funding sources there. I don't know about any outcomes.

AH—Chris will be gone next Monday and Tuesday. I want to be gone the Monday and Tuesday at the beginning of elk season. We can move the budget sessions to Wednesday.

-5:00:20—CB arrives. He's missing his wallet.

AH fills him in of the FAC.

CB—I'm going with the Community Action for the City Council of Omak. I'm trying to get a letter of intent to check their commitment to the project.

AH—I saw that Rena (Shawver, Executive Director, Community Action Council) got emails from members of the Housing Coalition saying they agree that \$250,000 should be used for that. I don't know if she needs a letter from us saying we're doing that. (See notes from the BOCC meeting of Sept. 30 for the discussion of the \$250,000 and the Housing Coalition.)

CB—That would be good. We need to show that.

-4:58:21—AH to JT—What are you doing here?

JT—I'm not on the agenda, but I've got a letter from the WDFW.

JT explains the situation—The county owns 3.41 acres on the Methow River south of Carleton. It's completely surrounded by WDFW land, and they would like to buy it from the county. The county has no use for it and are willing to sell it for \$108,000. JT has two documents for the commissioners to approve—an Option of Purchase and a Statement of Just Compensation. If the county gets the paperwork done this week, the deal can close by the end of the year.

-4:54:59—No public comment.

JT continues to discuss the sale of the 3.41 acres to the WDFW.

CB—I move for the vice-chair to sign both documents. Motion passes 3-0.

JT—One more thing—Close out the Cameron Heights (?) project that didn't move forward. I have to ask for a portion or all of it not to be paid back. There's a CRAB (County Road Admin. Board) meeting on Thursday, Oct. 24. and they'd like one of the commissioners to attend, virtually is OK.

CB—I'll go. Send me an invitation and it'll go straight onto my calendar.

JT leaves.

-4:41:03—AH—staff meeting time. Pete?

PP—I'm Pete Palmer, Planning Director.

PP—On Thursday, we're putting the zone code out for the second round of comments. It'll be on our website. We'll work with Maurice (Goodall, Emergency Management) to put it out over his notification

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system. It'll be on the radio and in all four county papers and run for two weeks. There will be a 30-day comment period.

AH—Emily, did you get that?

ES—Yes, I did.

PP—We'd like to update our vacant Planner 1 job description to add GIS duties. So, the person would do site analysis in our office and work down the hall in the GIS office, too. This will help relieve some of the workload created for GIS due to our new permit tracking system. So I need a resolution.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 136-2024, to revise the existing entry level Planner 1 position to include GIS duties. Motion passes 3-0.

PP—My last thing for today is—the Planning Commission didn't have a quorum, so I rescheduled for tonight. It's to get the last of the stipulation order through. But tonight, there won't be a quorum. We polled all the Planning Commission members. Two people were committed, the rest of them pretty much were not. One stayed back to see what everyone else was saying.

PP—I'd like to request permission to run this code change as a legislative change. We've done other code changes like this. I can put it out for public comment and run it as a procedural amendment since it doesn't affect the zoning of any specific piece of property. The changes will say we're going to use the permit tracking software system. It has to do with application process under Title 20 (of the Okanogan County Code) the Shoreline Management Plan.

PP—Two things: I'm requesting permission to put it out for comments initiated by the BOCC as a legislative update. Second, I want to run it as a procedural amendment.

PP—I've showed it to Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) and she's fine with it.

CB—I move to approve the change and approach to the adoption of the procedural amendment to the zoning code and treat it as a legislative action which doesn't require the recommendation of the Planning Commission.

PP—Plus it's a procedural amendment, it doesn't require a public hearing.

AH—It'll go out for comment but doesn't require a public hearing? Because it's just putting into code the actual process we use to check for water and stuff like that?

PP—All it's doing is putting into code that we're going to use the permit tracking software, and what permits are required—the ones that require SEPA and the two-week comment period. It's under the Okanogan County Code 17A.340.080.

CB—My motion was to run it as a procedural amendment to the code, so I don't think I need to change anything. If there's a problem with the code, we can have a public hearing. But Esther said it was OK. Motion passes 3-0.

AH—When we get into the Shoreline updates, could you let us know if the Planning Commission can't for a quorum. If not, we'll have to do something.

PP—Will do. PP leaves.

-4:30:04—AH—Nick?

NB—I'm Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager.

NB—Not much this week. We're doing pressure washing, marking what needs to be fixed or repaired. We'll shut the water system down in the north.

NB—The spay and neuter clinic will be at the Agriplex next week.

NB—We're going to be putting out more outdoor LED lights.

AH—I hope they're not straight down but tilted a little bit, so we get decent coverage.

NB—We're repairing equipment—the groomer and the race gate that was damaged during the fair. No one wants to point a finger as to who damaged it.

NB—We're down to four members of the FAC.

AH—We need to discuss how things are going to progress now.

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NB—We need the well engineer's report.

NB—That's all I've got. NB leaves.

4:25:35—AH—Tim?

TM—I've got a quote for the Ringhoffer Building, or whatever we're calling it. One quote for the fire alarm system. There's another company that will give us a quote, too, but they're going to be pretty close. \$26,845. Do we want to go with that?

AH—We have tenants there and it's a county asset. Not having a fire alarm system there would be ...

TM—Plus there's insurance, too. I'll get another quote from the other company that does our stuff here.

TM—I'm going to order blinds for the Courthouse and we'll put them in ourselves.

AH—Get good ones.

TM—I'm getting Levolors with a 10-year guarantee. It'll be \$22,000 to \$24,000. I can get them for 50% off if I order by Wednesday.

Discussion about what blinds are the best. In the end, the commissioners decide to let TM decide.

AH—I know you've been super busy, but have you looked at the glass in the prosecutor's office?

TM—Yes. I've talked to a seller and it's several weeks to get it.

TM—That's all I've got. TM leaves.

-4:17:30—CB—Here's an idea I would have shared earlier, but I was late. Re: public records requests (PRR), which is costly for us. I think we could save money if we could identify documents as we get them and just make them available from the first.

AH—I agree but give me an example.

CB—Various reports. The Connections Report. There are lots of them. Things we'd automatically send out if they're requested

AH—I'd like to ask Cameron about typical PRRs. Let's have a public facing portal. Our emails are all public.

CB—Some things need discretion. Do we have to redact information?

AH—Or a draft report? We don't have to send a draft report out if somebody requests.

CB—You can put a watermark on it that labels it as a draft. Some documents are already linked to on the agenda. That was a selling point in AV Capture. It's got the agenda, and you can do action items.

Resolutions would be good. Other documents, where someone is digging really deep, might need some discretion. I'll talk to Cameron about it.

-4:11:09—AH—Did you see this email from a lady in Tunk Valley

Discussion about minimum lot sizes, wells going dry, the inability of drilling on less than 160 acres.

AH—Beaver Dam Analogs would be useful in Tunk Creek. They'd help saturate the ground and raise the water level.

CB—Typically the Analogs are used to help the fish run, not to recharge the water table.

AH—For the Tunk, I'd do it just to make sure wells don't go dry. Not to allow more wells.

CB—We don't have a policy of no drilling on less than 160 acres. Our policy was not to allow sub-divisions resulting in parcels of less than 160 acres.

AH—Right now, you can drill of any parcel in the Tunk Valley, no matter what size.

CB—I know her, and I'll talk to her.

Discussion includes road building with sub-division into small lots.

CB—When we adopted the amendment, we should have included in the recitals several more things that we did. The issues include the road system. You need a road system that will serve the development when it's all developed.

CB—You can end up with lots of easements and private roads and it doesn't work out well.

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CB—We shorted ourselves with the recitals of fact for changing the zoning. It should have been much more comprehensive than just the water situation.

A person attending the meeting asks about Homeowners' Associations (HOAs) and roads.

AH—With an HOA, most of the time, you have platted roads within the development. But we're talking about just a two-track to get back to a lot but there's no HOA.

CB cites an example of an easement—the road gets muddier and muddier, and so wider and wider.

-3:47:10—CB—Did JN get this email? It's about the Fair. I'll read it.

CB—It's to the BOCC. "When choosing people to be on the FAC, the following things should be taken into consideration.

1. No superintendent of any barn in the Fairgrounds should be on the FAC, as they have one job to do: to take care of their barn.
2. To avoid any conflict of interest, no couple, married or unmarried, should both be on the FAC.
3. No FAC member should be on any subcommittee where they receive compensation for their participation.

CB—I have to agree with #3, and #2 as well. I don't know about #1.

AH—I'd love to have a longer discussion about the fair when we have time. We all know the purchasing requirements and all that stuff for the Fair. I think we consider a change in the way we do business. Model it after what other counties have done.

CB—It takes strategic planning.

AH—That's why I'm not saying "Today, we have to do this..."

AH—When we had the Fair Board, the State Auditor came in and spanked the county for the way the Board was functioning. The commissioners should have gone---Hmmm. We should turn it over to a non-profit entity, like the Friends of the Fair so they could do those things. But that discussion's not for today.

CB—I appreciate the suggestion.

The talk turns to Hurricane Milton. They wonder why people live in Florida because of the humidity.

-3:39:36—AH—It's 10:30 and we have a hearing: Okanogan County 2025 Taxing District Revenue Sources for Current Expenses and Public Works Road Finds and District Budgets RCW 84:55:120.

AH—Staff report: AH—These are the required public hearing we have to have to identify the revenue sources to the public.

CB—We're considering Resolution 137-2024—to authorize the Current Expense levy collection. Also 2025 in addition to the % increase as allowed by law. There's also a levy certification.

CB—Current expense levy—last year was \$6,662,559. There's the 1% we're allowed (\$666,255), new construction estimate (\$94,143) and the state utility estimate (\$2,684).

AH—Are we certifying the amount?

LJ—Yes. The estimated levy amounts are here (points to a document AH is holding).

CB—We're authoring these amounts to be collected?

LJ—Yes.

AH—So we want to add 5% due to the discussion we had with the Assessor. Our numbers are also exactly what he said to put in the budget. 1% from last year, 1% from new construction and the State utility estimate. The assessor has to take the lower of the two numbers.

AH—I want the amount to be \$6,995,682.

AH—No public comments.

AH and CB check the numbers on all of the resolutions for the three public hearings.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 137-2024 which increases the levy amount by \$66,625.55, which is the 1% increase exclusive of the road fund and the new construction. Motion passes 3-0.

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CB—I move to approve the Current Expense levy certification \$6,995,683. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 138-2024 authorizing the Road Levy collection in addition to 1% increase, the dollar amount will be \$54,453 and excludes the new construction. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—I move to approve the Road Levy certification levy for \$5,727,071. Motion passes 3-0.

AH—I'll close this public hearing.

-2:52:48—AH—It's 11:15. We have a public hearing about the Oroville Rural EMS 2025 Taxing District revenue sources and budget.

CB—I move we convene as the Oroville EMS district. Motion passes 3-0.

AH—Staff report. This is a resolution to adopt the EMS budget for Oroville and authorize the 1% increase in the levy and the levy certification. We worked on the budget a couple of weeks ago and have it pretty well finalized.

AH—Any public comments? No.

AH—Let look at the numbers.

CB—Grand total of the budget is \$689,366. Services are \$223,085.

AH—Do we have the thing from Larry (Gilman, County Assessor)? Oroville EMS budget last year was \$227,152. 1% increase is \$2,272. New construction is \$2,438, and state utilities are \$340. Total is \$232,202. Grand total for revenue excluding carry-over (\$452,000)

Lots of discussion of the various numbers. Some were based on estimates.

AH—We need to determine if we'll contract the entire amount of the budget to Lifeline. \$19,350/month.

CB—Any administrative costs on our part?

AH—Last year it was only about \$3,000.

AH—We've got other expenses, too. Clerical, dispatch, etc. about \$12,000, but I'd take that money out of the carry-over. Renegotiate the contract to try to get more coverage time. So, budget \$232,000 plus \$12,000.

AH—So we won't do the resolution to adopt the budget yet, but we will do the other documents.

Discussion about just which numbers go where. If you use 5% increase, you get \$238,509.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 2-2024 of the Oroville EMS District authorizing the levy to be collected in 2025 and increasing the levy as allowed by law. Motion approved 3-0.

CB—I move to approve the levy certification to be \$238,510. Motion approved 3-0.

AH—I close the public hearing.

LJ—There's the vouchers, too.

CB—I move to approve payment of the voucher for Lifeline—\$18,444. Approved 3-0.

-2:32:37—CB—I move to adjourn as the Oroville EMS and convene as the Methow EMS. Approved 3-0.

AH—Public hearing for Methow taxing district 2025 revenue sources and budget.

AH—We're still working on the budget right now. Cindy (?) has to make sure our numbers are correct. So, the budget is not ready to be adopted yet.

AH—Previous year's levy was \$1,153,625 X 1.05 should be \$1,211,307.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 2-2024 of the Methow EMS District authorizing the levy to be collected in 2025 and increasing the levy as allowed by law--\$11,536.25. Motion approved 3-0.

CB—I move to approve the levy certification total amount to be \$1,211,307. Motion approved 3-0.

AH—I close the public hearing.

-2:28:22—CB—I move we adjourn at the Methow EMS District and convene as Tonasket EMS District. Approved 3-0.

AH—We've got \$214,391 plus \$2,700 in State and Wildlife PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), and \$2,900 in timber excise tax for a total of \$219,919 revenue next year. Expenses will be \$219,919. We'll be totally

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expended. We won't be able to pay a contract until the 1st half taxes of 2026, unless the county loans or somehow approves money to be spent for this to be paid back by the district. Registered warrants. The beginning fund balance will be \$0 on January, 1, 2026. We hope the levy passes in 2025.

CB—I move to adopt the Tonasket EMS budget attached to Resolution 1-2024. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—I move we pay the voucher for June.

LJ—We didn't receive the invoice until just now. They just recently noticed they didn't receive the money when they should have.

CB—I move to approve the June voucher for \$16,200. Motion approved 3-0.

CB—And I move to approve the April voucher for \$16,200. Motion approved 3-0.

CB—I move we adjourn as the Tonasket EMS and reconvene as the BOCC. Motion approved 3-0.

AH—So we did all the certifications and adopted the Tonasket budget. We still have the Oroville and Methow Valley budgets to adopt.

-2:13:52 AH—Recess for lunch. We'll reconvene at 1:30.

AH and CH discuss BARS codes.

-2:08:32—AH—It's 1:30. We've got the budget review work session.

AH—This isn't a Finance Committee meeting, so I'll run the show.

The commissioners, Cari Hall, County Auditor, Pam Johnson, County Treasurer and Lisa Schreckengas, Finance Manager, discuss the 2024 ending amounts for various budgets in preparation for writing the 2025 county budget.

Afterwards they discuss again CB's idea that posting lots of documents on the website could save a lot of money spent on filling PRRs. AH is skeptical of any savings.

Commissioners pass Resolution 142-2024 to authorize a budget supplemental for the Auditor's Office for \$45,000 for election expenses, and pass Resolution 143-2024 to give Cari Hall and Jamie Groomes the authority to sign timesheets for other departments when those department heads are unavailable.

Adjourn for the day at 3:40.