

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday AM, January 21, 2025

In Attendance:

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, District 3

AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, District 1

NT—Nick Timm BOCC, District 2

LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board

ZK - Zak Kennedy - County contact in re Legislative Session

PB - Paul Budrow - Okanogan County Sheriff

MT - Mike Thompson, Chelan County Sheriff

CH - Cari Hall - County Auditor

PM - Pam Johnson, County Treasurer

JT - Josh Thomson, County Engineer Temperatures/tank problems, bill tracking, legislative bills, road tax

KK - Kent Kovalenko, Solid Waste Management

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

To locate items in real time, see the clock on the wall of the AV Capture Screen at https://www.okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php.

Summary of significant discussions:

*Meeting minutes: Explanation as to how response to incoming e-mails to Commissioners are dealt with.

*Public comment: Requesting update on public online access to Chronicle's legal notices - more follow-up needed from Commissioners.

*Legislative updates Legislature has just begun. Ferguson is straight-forward and will explain his reasons. HB 188 (Wind and solar siting) including impact upon counties and their roads; HB 1237 (Environment and energy); One-page guide for legislators being designed to delineate impacts of laws upon rural counties, since the majority of legislators come from urban areas." Hover also concerned about constant erosion of 2nd Amendment rights.

*Sheriff Paul Burrow request: Okanogan County to join other counties in request to add expenses of search and rescue to Discover Pass fees, considering the fact that most of the county's search and rescues involve individuals who are not residents of the county. Chelan County Sheriff Mike Morrison heading up this effort.

*Treasurer/Auditor report: Detailed, unclear conversation regarding budgetary issues. Changes being made by state. Treasurer claims "They want us to manipulate things that shouldn't be manipulated." There will be a finding from the State regarding ARPA funds. Listening to AV Capture is recommended for additional details. The "EDEN" sunsets at the end of this year. County will work out problems with the state. More budget problems expected for next year.

*County engineering in good shape. Temperatures/tank problems, bill tracking, legislative bills, road tax Solid Waste: Lengthy discussion of "Extended Product Responsibility," in which the producer who does the packaging pays for its recycling.

9:00 AM - Pedge of Allegiance, Review meeting minutes

JN- Has questions regarding the fairgrounds and resources. What were talking about last week needs to begin. (Fairground zoning?)

AH - Reason we do "that" is so there's a single point of contact(*talking about which commissioner is dealing with which issues.*) If I get an e-mail and you are included and that's your issue, I'm not going to respond. Because that would be like having a meeting without a quorum. You will not get an e-mail from me, but I will have the information.

AH - On the fairgrounds, if you have questions, just go down and talk with Nick. What you are proposing may be within your budget, but it may cause you to need money from somewhere.

9:15: Public Comment

Isabelle Spohn: Asks whether BOCC has had time to check on public access to legal notices posted by the Chronicle.

JN: I got it - It comes right up. Just Google "Chronicle Legal Notices" and it comes right up.

I. Spohn - Google works great. When I can't find something on the county website, it comes right up on Google.

AH - (*Clicking on one date for legal notices*) Wait a minute. It's getting a little laborious here now.....(*To Isabelle*) We'll check into it (*assuming with the Chronicle*) and get back with you.

9:26 - AH/JN discussing Chronicle website in re Legal Notices - mentioning that classified ads are numbered now.

JN - (Unintelligible)

AH - You mean about Cmr. Upthegrove canceling, like 20 timber sales now?

JN - Yeah.

Commissioners attending to computers.

9:30 AM Legislative Update: Zak Kennedy

ZK (Pleasantries.) It's very early in the session. Hard to tell how things will be going. Do you get my updates?

JN, NT - Yes

ZK - Ferguson threw everyone for a loop. We were not expecting the moderate approach. He was good with Gregoire. Ferguson is very intelligent, communicates well - but will not be afraid ...he says we won't do that, but he will tell us why. Previously, we'd get no explanations as to why. That said, there's a couple of bills to take a look at:

***HB 188 - (*Wind and solar siting*)** *A lot of counties are having problems with wind farms/solar.*

***HB 1237 (*Environment and energy*)** Council, citing evaluations, etc. Look at the report I sent you. Let me know where you stand on those.

***Info page for Legislators in re rural counties:** Next, I have been asked by other rural counties to put out a rural county one-pager for legislators. The majority of legislators come from urban areas. For example, SB 5215, covering loads on trucks, etc. Sometimes you don't need to do all this. A lot of people have not lived outside the city and don't know how this can be a problem. The one-pager would describe how it affects counties.

AH - interesting. I don't want to burden public works, but I see dump trucks all the time that roll up screen mesh. I don't know. Honestly, the worse part is a state plow going by and rocks break my windshields. But state trucks go by and.....I get it that a lot of rural counties don't want their public works directors don't want to put screens. Honestly, it's safer for everyone in your county if they cover loads.

ZK - But the message behind it is: if you are going to consider something like this, consider the resources it might cost counties and for how long. Just a general statement. Please consider that with our resources (*as rural counties*), staff is always limited. Can't hire a person to answer a 9-888 phone for emergency. What I'm saying is if there are things you'd like the legislature to consider when looking at laws on the county level...let me know and I can put it out - something you want the legislature to consider when looking at rural areas. Nothing specific. If you have nothing to add, that's fine.

AH - Am reading it now. Says if anyone who dumps a load has to stay there to clean it up and pay the costs. I agree.

JK - Agreed. The only challenge would be at what point is it considered cleaned up? For example, a piece of mud might be left on the track hoe.

AH - Yes, there might be some de minimus stuff. Honestly, we have a lot more to deal with than tarps over trucks. Public defense items might mean we have to shut down things.

JK - Public defense is one of the things we are dealing with. Also, prosecutors.

*AH - Also, constant erosion of 2nd Amend rights is big. Also, I watched Trump's exec order - foreign cartels are terrorists now. I think we should go after them as foreign terrorists. So we have a lot of other things going on.

Hopefully the legislature knows we can't put the burden of all this stuff on the counties. Hopefully you are getting the messages about these other things also.

JK - Right. We are saying we can't have all the burden on the counties. The legislators are thinking of King county, etc., and the municipalities can take on some of the expenses in that case. Like fentanyl - it isn't just an inner city problem - happens in the counties just the same. Same basic idea. Yes, it's a general statement.

***JN - HB 188** County road thing: What is the impact upon counties?

ZK - We are still trying to figure out what is going on there. Axel is sifting through this. As we find out ,we'll let you know. We are asking for clarify on that.they missed something when they drafted it.

JN - I am going over there (*to Olympia*) on Wed.

ZK - I can get you on the schedule if you want to meet with someone, shoot it to me. On top of that, being so early in the session, that's all. We'll have another update next week. That's all for this AM.

9:46 - Paul Burrow (PB) - Requesting *Addition of a fee to the Discover Pass to cover expenses for Search and Rescue for individuals not in county's jurisdiction.*

Budrow: We are looking for support measure from BOCC for something on the air support. I was able to talk with Cmr Hover to explain, but he requested I come in as a to why the sheriff's office is requesting support. What do you need to know:

Sheriff Morrison: Brief overview: We are constantly being requested by other counties to give helicopter support and training. It has added cost, but our search and rescue comes from our area and from out of state. We have talked with several state senators and Emergency Management, but one request from other counties was getting letters of support for certain counties - Okanogan County is one of them. Budrow has asked for support....it's on honoring our 8-900 \$\$ per hour to fly(he lists numerous counties that he will ask for

support) for joint operations. Chelan and other counties have already written letters. More of a group effort to highlight the significance of the bill. All the police chiefs came together. This ask was #2 overall for Washington picks. This is a brief overview of what we are wanting to achieve.

JN - I thought most of our (*air*) support comes in from Whidbey, but maybe not.

Morrison - Our last one was at Cutthroat Pass.

Budrow - Whidbey has been backing off quite a bit. They don't help with deceased persons. This is a tremendous help. We've also used a group out of Montana. We use help from all over the state, including Chelan County and rely on them quite heavily. They are great. I came before to you asking to help add a fee to Discover Pass or whatever. We would really appreciate your support to Morrison and others who help out.

Morrison - King, Snohomish, Chelan, Whidbey. - If there is inclement weather, they don't fly. Primarily our calls are in the Alpine Wilderness. Our hope is that by securing this funding, it would be continuous and keep our programs afloat. The state has provided \$\$ for their operations, but this will be our best effort to keep this running and help other counties as called upon.

AH - Trying to figure out. I think we will write this letter. Super important. A little frustrating when most of the earth and rescue we are doing are for people not living in our county. (Laughter all around.)

AH - To Budrow - could part of the Discover Pass include this? Sen Goehner tried to pass something. It got some traction on both sides but didn't go through. We just looked at the Skamania County where the Bigfoot guy was being searched for..... Something happened and they got lost. How do we do this without putting all the burden on Counties? They are coming from other countries also....Chelan county has been billed. Not reasonable to pass on to our taxpayers.

AH - We should say something about getting funding for search and rescue as well.

JN - I may talk with people in Olympia tomorrow

AH - Before we goIf we did a resolution ?

Morrison - More beneficial to have a letter for presentation to the legislative body.

AH to Budrow - We will put this into a letter of support rather than a resolution, asking for State funds to help search and rescue in all 39 counties.

10:00 AM Finance committee meeting- Treasurer Pam Johnson, Auditor Carrie Hall

Talk of nationwide weather while waiting for an unannounced person to get her materials. (Pam Johnson?) Unintelligible broken conversations.

10:08 - Pam Johnson, Treasurer; Cari Hall, County auditor

(Note: this conversation was very difficult to follow because there was no background information and the audio was not working well. The internet also went down for 10 minutes. We suggest interested parties listen to AV Capture with ear buds or headphones to the following conversation:)

Lanie has the PDC forms that we will sign. They only want the chairman of the board. If any BOCC are holding a vesting board where you make any decisions that we deal with And if you are on any of our bonding stuff. Like the board of a bank. Also refund letter to sign.

AH - Would it be hard to run a report that puts our beginning fund and ... We can put some reports on EDEN.

AH - We digested (?) 4.7 but we only brought forward 4.2. How long does this take? This is a one-time deal.

PM - January 4.3 percent Possible 4.5 drop, but they are anticipating a drop. We are kind of waiting. Any more questions?

NT - We met with them the week before last. Aren't they scheduled to come off warrants for 2026? Why is 2028 there?

PJ - That is what they want. They were supposed to be off for 2024. They did not meet their deadline. I agree to extend to 2025. Their proposal was to go to 2028 on register warrant. I told "her" what they are trying to do. "They" have "spoke" to the PUD and are getting on a payment plan to spread it out.

10:13 - Sound went off. Then zoom stopped. Internet not working.

10:23 - Internet came back on.

AH - Question about interest.

PJ - We'll just pick that up in our assessment. VERY BROKEN conversation through 10:25.

PJ - We are talking about \$36,000 now - not huge. But we have to remember.....I think the fund is unstable right now and the people watching over it....we don't need to be doing that. That we can let it just to into ??? improvement so they can see it.

10:26: AH - Re 11-2016 returning to format of 144-2025.

PM explains at 10:28. Eliminates an unnecessary step.

NT - thanks for streamlining.

People talking over each other.

PM - They are talking about our exit ?

AH - Exit is for 2023 audit.
(The calendar year.)

10:30 - CH We will be getting a "finding" due to ARPA funding. They were learning at the time and that was explained. . Don't know about the extent....

AH - LJ wasn't doing them back then. Lanie - do you now have total control? (Unintelligible.)

TH - Reports need to be done by accrual. Not paid. These reports were done by what was paid out instead....Lanie is aware of the difference. She and I can talk.

AH - Like I said, Lanie wasn't doing it back then....can't we write them that we have corrected.....

TH - They will say "here is the finding" and our response will be in the report.

AH - Why are they (we) so far behind? Even with Public Health - I would have thought I would need to make a statement about their findings.

CH - Last week we talked. In 2018 they told us to do it that way.
Complicated conversation.

10:35 - CH - long explanation of years past. C4, C5 reports - what she has to readjust. When we initially did it, it was like on a cash based system. They wanted to go to cash invested and positive or negative. In 2024, it was all negative and they complained. They want to net all the positives and all the negatives and use another column. The 2 columns should equal "cash on hand" but it doesn't work that way. We are refusing to do that....we want it to reveal what's actually going on. We need consistency because we've been audited by someone else at the state. Trying not to hold up the process, but hoping you can understand.

JN - Totally.

CH - We are insisting. Pam is onboard . Good and bad cop. That's where we are on that. We are waiting for the audit.

PJ - They want us to manipulate things that shouldn't be manipulated.

CH - (Attempts to further explain the confusing situation, and the ending fund balance.) Took me awhile to understand what they were trying to do. But it's

not fitting the check book. No doubt they will come up with something. It never comes down to a point that we don't agree - if it does, we'll come to you. I don't think that will happen - we will work with them as long as we understand why. I'm just glad I found out now. Takes about 3 1/2 - 4 months to complete the annual report because it's all manual.

So they will start trainings in February. I'm drawing a harder line about what they and we think - if we don't have parallels in May or June, we'll have a situation - we don't have time to do separate (reports?)

CH - Is this going to be like we think it should be? No. Too many people want separate lines for each item and there is only a 5-digit code.....etc. From the budget perspective, what is hanging out there. They said either line items or by departments. But I need more confirmation. We are hoping we will hit the target this time. We cannot and will not miss it again. It's paper vs linear.....Goes into details about the EDEN and various programs.

AH - Next year, we will have more budget problems. Next year, we will be in the \$800-900,000 range, and when you think about it, we balance our budget which means our revenue and our expenses are equal. There is no savings account in that budgetSo if we spend out, we have no carry-over. We will have to startwhat do we do? Start looking at different ends in "current" and see what we cut.

CH - Get the budget to departments for requests at beginning of July and look at it for a couple of hours.

AH - Look at labor costs and contracts. Have to start now. Don't want to be in October telling people they might not have a job.

CH - I sent a memo of concern You can see the increases each year have been absorbed by carryover and in 2024, it was a 1 million \$\$ difference.

AH - Explains complications with Cove, etc.

CH - We couldn't account for the tremendous increase in costs for everything.

AH - Inflation never goes down as much as it went up because the companies say people have been paying, so they will pay it.

10:49 - PJ - Talks about increase locally in price of gas over this weekend.

CH - Any more questions?

NT - EDEN is sunseting at the end of this year?

CH - Yes.

CH - Further explanations. Very complicated. It will be a learning curve. Some won't like it, but we have to do what we have to do.

AH - Revenue and expenditure percentages and contract percentage rising are the most important.

NT - last week's comment? Exec session? We agree to talk at this meeting, but then decided on exec session?

Some confusion. Someone says they decided to do it at this meeting. They are looking to Lanie, whose sound is not working.

AH - Let's move to next week. Discussion - it will be next week on Tuesday....much vacation time. It won't work.

CH - Is it something that one of you can talk with me about?.

AH - Moves to support refunds to taxpayers in 2024. (?No explanation.)

10:58 - Many voices. Chat about "1071" Talks about products coming into Washington. Side conversations interfere. Talks about how I-5 corridor will support rural communities.

11:00 AM Josh Thomson, County Engineer, Kent (Solid waste manager)

Kent - Fully staffed, nice going into spring. This is the grant for ? system. Goes over sections itemized, has to do with drilling new wells. Recommends.

AH - Any strings attached? Anything we can't live with?

Kent - No. This money will come out of operational fund. We are not seeing the shift in enviro thinkings at state level - they are thinking there will be a re-appropriation.

AH - Thinks interest calculation, last year on \$13,000 we made a lot of money.

Kent - Yes. We made enough to cover past few years. Not worried.

JT - even if we had designs now, the well drillers couldn't.....

Kent - I anticipate it being rolled over. Climate commitment act didn't get re-appealed, so that's where this \$\$ is coming from. Operationally, good even though a lot of mud. Curbside recycling - 1071 is in EPR bill

EPR - Consumer responsibility. If I'm Proctor and Gamble gel and sell you a box, I have to charge you for that box.

What does EPR stand for?

11:05 - Extended Product Responsibility - you are responsible cradle to grave.

AH - So manufacturers are charging for a box, but purchaser is going to pay for it. So it can be recycled. (Names the local hauler.)

11:08 - They will do a needs survey. Will come out and see the needs of the county and what our needs are vs other counties. Depending upon how this rolls out, they could dictate the curbside programs and say where the recycle boxes are. But County can opt out , so we are not adding to our plate just for cost of doing business. (Confusing) This is what 99% of haulers will do - let municipalities and.....

11:09 Bill 1154 - County will bypass local jurisdiction and go to Public health)A little push -back from Public Health and it looks like Pub Health can turn it

over to Ecology (at state level.) Private landfill on fire in Yakima....too much to fund. They are not municipal land fills, actually purchased by this company but they were looking to get their \$\$\$. Local Public Health will still be our agent - don't anticipate changes.

Bill 5088 - Public Utility tax, allowing county to assess utility taxes - solid waster, cable companies, etc - a way for county to get additional revenue.

AH - so we could apply utility tax for power transmission?

Say my power bill is \$100. County can assess up to 3% utility tax on my bill. This bill is generated from WSAC - Not enough

AH - So we could put a utility tax on garbage? (For general fund.)

KK - so 1/4 - 1/2 % for revenue. We can't increase rates, so Sen Chapman put it up this year. You should keep an eye on this.

JN - How is it being received?

KK - All cities can do this now. Not counties. You could also do something with the municipalities - you could add a 1/4 % at landfill at surface but not disposal.

AH - Because disposal is not technically a utility?

KK - if you put on a tax and a hauler dumps, part of their bill is disposal so you have to pick one or the other.

AH - Asks for a report on how much revenue (rough) outside of the cities?

JT - Some of the haulers are picking up in city and out of city?

NT - so easier to do on the consumer side.

AH - Person is bringing garbage to land fill.....Talk about who picks up in the cities..... I have to look at Twispa city can actually choose to just go off UTC rate.

AH - But does the city pay? Are they charging their residents a garbage fee?

JT - I see all the bills, And here it's part of the city.....in Twisp, I have a separate deal with WasteWise.

KK - I will figure it out. as the UTC, you are paying that. The city can charge off the UTC contract.

AH - So then would the UTC be paying the tax?

KK- Wastewise would cut the check and increase the rate by the appropriate amt.

JN - I know they get paid telephone, cable.

AH - Garbage may be one thing, but I know we get charged.....we are looking at a big budget issue.

KK - lets' check to see how it affects our county. Organic bottle bill will be introduced this year.

AH - Why do something that,,,,,,,,?

11:20 JT - On legislative side - nothing much changing.

AH - Asks about R- 2 and R-3's.

JT - Short spans and? Another quiet week. Kind of boring. On consent agenda - authorization to bid for traffic paint. Also, bid on 97 project.

AH - Had an -mail about Twisp -Carlton Road and access for new development. *(Note - This would be the Twisp Family Haven Development behind Hank's market.)*

JT - I hear the main access will be on Twisp-Carlton Road. Think it's in town limits.

AH - All the way to city limit is city street. Will you check? Also, have you heard about the roundabout? Going anywhere?

JT - I think they have been applying for CBG funds.

AH - Can you find out whether that access road is county or city so I can talk to the mayor?

(AVC cut out at 11:23)

Chat about contamination with plastic in garbage disposal in re "1554." (?HB 1554, WA State, "Reducing public health and environmental impacts from lead"?) I don't think we are talking about too much.

AH - If there are thousands of people comparing, we'd need to look at it. (Something about plastic bags in garbage.)

Chit - chat about the roundabout in Twisp. Cutting in and out.

AH - there are places where following ...and get off an exit and there is no entrance back. (Kent?) Standing up and talking to Andy. Can't hear.

AH - That's a modified one. You can skip it, right? Debate. Kent - so coming this way, you can continue to go. Coming this way.....So coming here, you can by pass,, or you can go through the roundabout. Hell - how does that work, when this is on and that is off. That's weird.

KK - Wait till you see what they've done. (They are looking at some sort of map.) Looks like well - constructed.

ZOOM WENT OFF AT 11:28 (people were still talking.)

