

Okanogan County Board of County Commissioners meeting

Monday, December 30, 2024 AM session

CB – Chris Branch, BOCC Vice-chair District 1

AH – Andy Hover, BOCC member, District 2

JN – Jon Neal, BOCC Chair, District 3

NB – Nick Bates, Fairground Manager

TE - Tom Even, Veterans Relief Board

MBe – Mike Beaver, Juvenile Detention

MBI – Michael Blake, Friends of the Range

EM – Esther Milner, Civil Deputy Attorney

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/bocc-boh-notes> and are not the official county record of the meeting. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later time, click [here](#).

Summary of Significant Discussion:

- *Updates on Fairgrounds, work on Agriplex flooring*
- *Veterans Relief Board quarterly update*
- *Update on security camera replacement for Juvenile Detention*
- *Transfer of county-owned weapons and equipment to non-profit Friends of the Range*
- *Discussion and vote on creating a Public Defense District for Okanogan County.*

The time notations refer to the time stamp on video that is published on the county's AV Capture site. To watch the video for this meeting, click [here](#).

00:00 – pledge of allegiance.

10:44 – public comment period – none

BOCC reviews previous minutes and makes corrections.

26:14 – Nick Bates (fairgrounds) gives update on plans for redoing the floor in the Agriplex annex. Also mentions that he bought a new gate for the RV entrance. Got a good deal at an auction. The gate is electric, keypad operated. Shows BOCC photos of the gate. They think it looks very nice. Also, has redesigned the drainage so that it flows away from the building.

33:00 – NB leaves.

Clerk - Michael Blake would like to talk to the BOCC about the gun range. Will contact him to see if he can come in today.

1:23:00 – Tom Even from Veterans Relief Board gives quarterly update – outreach to Twisp is going well, new PACT Act claims are strong. Our office has submitted 30 health care applications. This quarter we have given the following assistance: \$300 for groceries, \$351 for energy, \$1000 for funerals, \$500 for housing. OCCAC has occasionally been using our office to interview veterans from the north part of the county, which is a good deal. Oct – 12 claims, 220 calls; Nov – 9 claims, 210 calls; Dec – 6 claims, 200 calls. We served 55 Veterans in October, 43 in November, 37 in December. Paperwork assists are 35 in October, 30 in November, 24 in December. Things have been going well.

JN – is it normal for the numbers to drop at the end of the year?

Tom Even- yes

AH – You will see that we cut about \$3400 out of your budget next year. But if you look at the amount actually spent over the past few years, it should work out. If you look at the cost of staff (\$109K), and the amount we are allocated (\$100K), we are behind. You can see that we are using our reserves to make up the difference. In the future, we will adjust our budget accordingly. (AH agrees that they definitely need 2 staff to handle the work load). BOCC expresses appreciation for what the Veterans Relief Board does.

1:28:30 – TE leaves.

BOCC approves minutes from last 2 weeks.

1:34:00 Mike Beaver (Juvenile Detention) - Started process for getting security update quotes. Discusses details of bids. Priority is security cameras in Juvenile. \$127K would cover security cameras, and we could do the next phase (locks, etc.) next year.

Company that did the security update in Chelan county did a great job.

AH – asks if he has consulted with Karen in IT to make sure they are in the loop if new technology is being used.

MB – yes.

AH – asks if the budgeted amount is enough to do what they need to do.

MB – says he believes so.

Conversation about the details of bids and the process.

BOCC votes and approves funding for first phase (new security cameras), including sales tax if necessary.

1:43:30 – Michael Blake – Friends of the Range – promoting firearms, firearms training, etc. We have requested that some items given to the county by the NRA be transferred to our group. Those items were intended for training, which we are now contracted to do. It makes sense for us to take ownership since we are doing the training.

AH – asks what happens to the guns if your group dissolves?

MB – there are rules that say we have to give to another non-profit or to a government agency. The NRA has approved this.

JN – asks about a gun safe that was donated by a private individual.

MB – says he has a letter from that person approving this proposal.

AH – reads the letter.

BOCC – votes and approves to transfer ownership of donated items to Friends of the Range for continues use as a public safety service.

1:55:48 – public hearing on Creation of Public Defense District. OK Cty civil attorney Esther Milner joins via Zoom. CB reviews background legislation explaining why they are

considering creating a Public Defense District. Lengthy discussion about whether to proceed with creating an Office of Public Defender for Okanogan County. Question about the term of the new position, and whether it is defined by statute. It is determined that it is defined by RCW. One commenter urges the BOCC not to create this position right now. EM says they have to do something, either create the new PDD, or put out an RFQ for a new Public Defender contract. (The current contract ends on April 30, 2025.) Comments from public opposing and in favor. Comments reflect concern about uncertainty causing attorneys to look elsewhere for employment. EM clarifies that even if they have a Public Defender position they will still need to contract out some of the work. There is just too much to do it all in house. One comment urged BOCC to commit to equal funding of Prosecutor and Public Defense. Discussion about whether creating the district would still allow for contracting out some of the work. One comment points out that the State is still working on figuring out how much they are going to contribute to the cost.

AH – discusses budgetary concerns, pointing out that the future costs of the Public Defender District are unknown and the rules could change to require more expense. OK County just had to use \$1M from reserves to balance our budget this year, and it is only going to get worse in future years. He points out that the state is only contributing \$48K towards the cost, when the expense exceeds \$1.5M.

CB – says that it comes down to priorities.

2:36:00 - BOCC votes to approve creation of Public Defender District.

People start arriving for swearing in of new commissioner, Nick Timm, and returning commissioner Andy Hover.

BOCC approves new motion regarding transfer of equipment to Friends of the Range, and repeals their former motion. Adjourns until afternoon session.

2:58:30 – Superior Court Judge Robert Grim swears in the commissioners.