

# Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

## Monday, Dec. 30, 2024 PM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, Chair, District 3

AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, District 1

CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, District 2

LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board

AE—Ariel Edwards, Lead Entity Coordinator, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

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

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### Summary of significant discussions:

- The commissioners hear a presentation by Ariel Edwards of the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board concerning the process of choosing a new member for the county's Citizens Advisory Committee of the Salmon Recovery Board. They select Brad Armstrong because he has experience with the Okanogan Irrigation District and because he will represent the Okanogan subbasin.
- Commissioners Hover and Neal say good-bye to Commissioner Branch, who is retiring. Commissioner Hover tells him: "You and I have not seen eye-to-eye at many times, but I've respected everything you've done and said for the past eight years. You're good at getting your point across and I was glad to sit next to you for eight years." Commissioner Neal said he's worked with Commissioner Branch for many years, both with the City of Oroville and the county, and while they didn't always agree, they always came to an agreement.
- Meeting adjourned at 2:47.

**-1:26:00**—Before the afternoon session begins with the commissioners trading stories about crossing the border into Canada.

**-1:22:00**—JN—It's 1:30. Ariel?

AE—I'll share my screen for my presentation. I'm Ariel Edwards, Lead Entity Coordinator for the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board. I'm here to request that you pick one person to fill a vacancy for the Okanogan Citizens' Advisory Committee vacancy. I'll forward your recommendation to the Salmon Recovery Board, and they'll give final approval in February.

AE—Here's a little background. There are two counties in the Upper Columbia Region—Chelan and Okanogan—and each county has a Citizens Advisory Committee. The Chelan Advisory Committee represents the Wenatchee and Entiat subbasins, and the Okanogan Advisory Committee represents the Methow and Okanogan subbasins. Together, the Chelan and Okanogan committees form the Upper Columbia Citizens' Advisory Committee. Each county's committee has seven members.

AE—The state legislature enacted the Salmon Recovery Planning Act, [RCW 77.85](#), in 1999. The law requires that a "strong, locally based effort to restore salmon habitat should be established by providing a framework to citizen volunteers to work effectively." This community input is often referred to as the "Washington Way". It plays a critical role in funding. The citizen volunteers make up the Citizens

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Advisory Committees, or CACs. The CACs are one of the two groups that determine which projects are funded. Technical experts make up the other group.

AE—The funding process begins with project proposals being submitted. The CAC members attend spring project tours, host sponsor presentations and score project proposals. The CACs provide the final regional ranking for Salmon Recovery projects.

AE—There are currently six active members in the Okanogan CAC—two from the Okanogan subbasin, and four from the Methow subbasin. Together they represent interest groups including agriculture, landowners, environmental groups, the county, local business, ranchers, fish enhancement groups, the tribes and volunteer groups.

AE—We’re currently seeking one more person to be on the Okanogan CAC. The two nominees are Brad Armstrong and Merry Maxwell. There is information about them in your packets. I’d like you to review and select one nominee and I’ll forward that name to our Board of Directors for the final approval. Any questions about the candidates or the process?

AH—I think Brad’s a good choice.

JN—So do I.

AH—There are already four people from the Methow and only two from the Okanogan. Brad’s been involved in a lot of things going on with the Okanogan Irrigation District.

CB—Who’s Merry?

AH—She’s from the Methow. She’s got a good resume, but I think Brad would balance out the Methow/Okanogan split, and with Brad’s work with the Irrigation District, having to work through projects, he brings a different perspective to it.

CB—You would know.

JN—The Okanogan Irrigation District is the largest fish mitigation project in the state.

AH—So I move to have the clerk draw up an appointment letter for Brad Armstrong to the Okanogan County Citizens Advisory Committee. Motion passes 3-0.

AE—OK. Thanks very much. Have a good day.

**-1:14:23**—Commissioners chit chat about Robert’s Rules of Order and other topics while they wait for the public hearings to begin in about 20 minutes. CB mentions that he was once in a meeting where someone moved that wolves should be introduced into the Seattle City Parks.

**-52:30**—JN—It’s 2:00 PM. Time for the public hearing for the budget supplemental for Budget #113—BECCA’s Bill.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 194-2024, a budget supplemental of \$14,000 for Budget #113. Approved 3-0.

JN—I close the hearing.

AH to CB—I want to say something. You and I have not seen eye-to-eye at many times, but I’ve respected everything you’ve done and said for the past eight years. You’re good at getting your point across and I was glad to sit next to you for eight years.

CB—I appreciate that. It’s epic in a lot of ways. You’ve got to have disagreement.

JN—That’s why we’re here. We need to have differing opinions.

CB—It’s just a matter of articulating it and maybe coming out with something better than we both believed.

AH—You’ve taught me a lot of stuff over the years about what to look at, etc. I appreciate that.

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CB—Well, good luck with it all. There will be some challenging times. Especially after the whole unexpected thing of COVID. We'd never done anything like that before.

AH—I think we handled that the best we possibly could. There are lots of things I heard about people suing because they lost their job for not getting vaccinated. With what we knew at the time, we did pretty good.

CB—It was a big pandemic, but it could have been a whole lot worse. Some people in the field were saying—This is the one! This is what we've been talking about!

**-47:40**—JN—It's 2:05 and time for a public hearing about a budget supplemental for Probation Fund, Budget #111.

CB—We have a resolution authorizing a budget supplemental within Budget #111 for \$6,700 from the reserve ending fund balance to go to two probation officer positions.

CB—I move to approve Resolution 195-2024. Motion passes 3-0.

AH—That's the final act. All that's left is to adjourn.

LJ—There are some vouchers to do.

JN—I'd like to reiterate what AH said. I've dealt with you (CB) for many years, one way or another between city and here. We don't always agree, but we always came to an agreement.

CB—Thank you. Often times there's so much information out there about what we have to make decisions on. I admit that once I took an alternate position on something because everybody was so into it. I was playing devil's advocate. Maybe I didn't fully believe what I was advocating for, but at least we had the conversation. It'll be interesting for you with the new person.

AH—I was just thinking about that. I've gotten used to you. I know when I can joke with you, and I'll have to relearn all that stuff.

JN—You both know what you can and can't do—from a legal standpoint. That's a big part of it and a challenge for people who haven't been involved in any of this.

CB—You always have to check about the legality of something.

AH—I really appreciate that you'd say—What does the attorney say. Instead of opening your mouth first and sounding really dumb when the attorney says you can't do that, you'd ask the attorney first.

CB—I used to say—I don't argue with the attorney. But now I say—well, what about this part of the statute. Occasionally, they'll say—wait a minute. What's your angle? What are you thinking about? That's what I appreciate. You're trying to understand their advice. Often times the attorneys will just take the least risk.

AH—That's the thing. That's their job.

CB—But sometimes it's too easy. Talking with attorneys about water rights. It changes a lot and you could have situations they haven't heard about. Discusses a legal issue about taxes on utilities in towns.

**-35:09**—AH (discussion returns to vouchers)—The Dec. 26 batch we passed, they were updated with different numbers.

Commissioners approve updated payroll vouchers. Total amount is \$2,815,674.56.

Commissioners approve updated vouchers for Dec. 30 for a total of \$4,102.53.

CB—I move to approve the grant agreement for Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC) and Okanogan County for the reroof of the building. Amount is \$150,000. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—I move to approve the interlocal agreement between Okanogan County and the town of Winthrop for building inspector services. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—And I move to approve the interlocal agreement between Okanogan County and the city of Pateros for building inspector services. Motion approved 3-0.

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CB—I move to approve Resolution 197-2024, creating funding for an office of Public Defense. Motion passes 3-0.

CB—That was a revealing conversation. It's a dilemma created outside of something we already had trouble with.

AH—Everything was going fine until the contractor decided to terminate. And the statement that we were moving too fast, well, you asked us to let you out of the contract early.

AH—Well, that was a very uncontentious last few minutes.

LJ—Are you going to do my performance evaluation today?

JN—Sure.

AH—I move to go into executive session under 110(1)(g)—performance of a public employee, inviting LJ. We'll be back at 2:38.

**-7:40**—They return at 2:44. Some discussion of who if anyone will move into CB's office.

Meeting adjourned at 2:47.