

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
June 3, 2024 AM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, Chair, District 3—Absent
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, District 2
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
NB—Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
TM—Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor
RS—Rena Shawver, Executive Director, Community Action Council

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

The time stamps refer to the times on the AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date at https://www.okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php. To locate items in real time, the clock on the wall in the AV Capture screen can be helpful.

Summary of significant discussions:

- Isabelle Spohn comments about recent lack of transparency with regard to the Planning Commission.
- Nick Bates (Fairgrounds Manager), Maurice Goodall (Emergency Management) and Tim Meadows (Maintenance Supervisor) give their weekly updates to the commissioners.
- Rena Shawver (Executive Director, Community Action Council) updates the commissioners about the Community Action Council and the Homeless Coalition.
- Meeting adjourns for the day at 11:16.

-2:17:00—Pledge of Allegiance

AH—There's not much going on today.

AH to CB—You'll be here on Wednesday? (The architects for the Courthouse remodel will be visiting on Wednesday.)

CB—Yes.

AH to LJ—Can you send an invitation to all the elected officials for Wednesday?

LJ—Yes.

AH—Did we move the day of the monthly Finance Committee meeting? Check with Cari (Hall, County Auditor) and Pam (Johnson, County Treasurer).

AH to LJ—Can you schedule Mike Beaver (newly hired Juvenile Department Administrator) to come talk to us on the 17th or 18th? I'd like to hear his thoughts on hiring a person for the job he did.

-2:02:25—AH—It's time for public comments.

Isabelle Spohn makes a comment concerning the lack of transparency in Planning Commission meetings.

1) Tonight's PC meeting isn't on the Commissioners' agenda again under "state, community, & other meetings". I thought this had been corrected after I called in about it last time.

2) Tonight's meeting is not listed on the Planning website. The website is still listing the May 20th meeting as "upcoming. "

3) There is no agenda for tonight's meeting listed anywhere.

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4) The Planning Commission is out of compliance with recent state law again, because once again it isn't holding a public comment period. I thought this had been corrected months ago. The last public comment period the PC held at their meetings was on February 20th of this year.

I'm concerned about the decreasing level of transparency at the county. There've been great strides in transparency, but recently there's been some backsliding, particularly with the Planning Commission. Thanks.

AH—If you go to the Planning Commission website, there's a meeting scheduled for 6-4-24 and the agenda is there.

IS—Thanks. That must have been posted within the last 10 minutes or so. That needs to be different.

AH—I'll talk to them about public comments. They should be taking them based on the new law.

IS—Thanks. Can you get the public comments on the agenda. Also, the meetings aren't listed along with the zooms people can attend. The meetings aren't listed on the BOCC's agenda like they used to be.

AH—We'll get them added.

IS—Thanks very much.

AH—I think the Planning Commission has a different view of comments than we do. I think I'll run over them and talk to Pete (Palmer, Director of Planning) real quick.

LJ—It'd be nice if they email us when they're going to use this room for a meeting so I can put it on the calendar and the room won't get double-booked.

-1:47:05—AH—It's 9:30. Nick?

NB—I'm Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager.

NB—We had some events in the Agriplex, and things are working better. The Mexican rodeo is coming up in a couple of weeks.

AH—We've had it before.

NB—I got new fans put in for the (*inaudible*) building. We're cleaning up the landscaping. I priced bark, but I'm not buying it as \$70/yard.

AH—I don't really like bark.

NB—I hate bark. I used to sell it for a living.

NB—Sawyer is going to give me all the white rocks I want. We'll put it around the racetrack and it'll look read good. I'll put drain cloth down there before.

Discussion of the Big Beef Barn and needed roof repair. NB thinks it can be repaired pretty easily.

NB—The Horse Barn. I called everybody on the small works roster. I think I'll get an estimate from two of them. Discussion of fixing the posts.

NB—That's all I've got. Things are moving along.

-1:38:55—AH—Maurice?

MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management.

MG—Everything is calm right now. There's a weather system coming through.

MG—We're going to start burn restrictions just because of the calendar.

AH—There are a couple of places on irrigation ditches in the Methow where they can put takeouts for pumper trucks. The DNR says they may have some money to do that. How do we get that coordinated?

MG—Start with just talking about it.

AH—Maybe we should talk with Cody (Acord, Fire Chief for Fire District 6) to ask where the good places for takeouts would be. Try to move that along. We've got the well in Mazama which will be year-round. Irrigation ditches are only useful during irrigation season.

MG—You also need to look for a place where you can get the pumper truck up close to the ditch. And it won't happen this year.

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AH—Sure.

MG—Any questions? (There are none, so MG leaves.)

-1:35:30—AH—Tim, what’s the good news for today?

TM—I’m Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor.

TM distributes a photo of the parking area at the Public Works building. Different departments now have their own parking area.

TM—There’s an entity that wants to take the whole thing.

AH—I got a call asking about the boats. There isn’t room for them here, but there’s room in Quonset huts at the fairgrounds. Can you talk to Josh (Thomson, Public Works) about that.

Discussion of TGIs (Truss Joint I-Joists) the county already and whether they could be used in the Horse Barn.

TM—I talked to the undersheriff about his containers.

AH to CB—I was talking to the Sheriff the other day about holding evidence. They’d found containers for \$3,400, which is a good deal. I told them to talk to Tim about space for the two containers.

TM—They’ll fit on the gravel, and they won’t lose any parking.

AH—How’s the Auditor’s Office remodel coming? Is it all scheduled?

TM—It’s not totally scheduled. We’ll do the last cabinet on the weekend.

LJ—The Auditor still needs to clear out some space.

After some discussion about work in the Auditor’s office, TM leaves.

AH chats with a person in the audience. He seems to be a candidate for office because he says he has to “go out and shake the babies and kiss the hands” while AH does not. Later they discuss homelessness. AH says it’s not as visible as on the West side, but there are people couch-surfing and living in RVs.

-1:19:10—AH corrects minutes.

-47:40—RS—I’m Rena Shawver, Executive Director of the Community Action Council in Okanogan County. Thanks for letting me give you a brief update about what we’re doing in the county and answer your questions.

RS—You’ve received the board information packets, but they’re lengthy. I’ll just give a brief overview of what happened in April.

RS—WestEast was out here in May working on the housing plan with planning departments across the county and looking at barriers to long-term housing. They’re being funded by a grant. They spent a full day with the Housing Coalition and in Methow, Pateros, Okanogan and Omak. They’ll be back for a two week stay starting June 17. We hope they’ll attend the Housing Coalition meeting when they’re here.

RS—That’s what the Coalition is doing. I’ll take my Coalition hat off now.

AH—Can I ask a question? I had a constituent call me the other day and ask for help. He lives in a travel-trailer under a cover and he has a small income. Is there help for him for his property taxes? The Treasurer’s Office found a program to help keep your house for low-income people.

RS—We don’t have any grants that cover property taxes.

AH—The problem is he’s 75 and low income, but since he lives in an RV, he can’t be exempted out of his property taxes. He’d have to be living in a building for that.

AH—Maybe I should direct him to the former mayor of Pateros. Maybe there’s something about housing. Our area has such high land values, we end up paying so much.

RS—We don’t have any funding to help for taxes, but he could use food pantries to help him lower his expenses.

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AH—But low-income and elderly can be exempt from property taxes. A tiny home could be exempt him, but an RV can't.

-40:15—RS—I'll put my Community Action Council (CAC) hat on now.

RS—We helped 104 households in April, including households with veterans, youth and the disabled.

AH—Can I ask another question? For veterans, how is it working?

RS—We get cash vouchers to help vets with housing costs. There's close work between our program, the veterans department and the Colville Tribal Veterans Department.

RS—We assisted 7 households with 16 people with hotel rooms. Also do wrap-around services to get people from instability to stability.

RS—We exited 5 households to stable housing in April. Could have done more but for the low availability of housing.

RS—We reached out to rural resources in Douglas and Chelan Counties CACs to learn about their shelter models. Most funding is coming from the counties. Our grants don't include much sheltering.

RS—We started in April to organize financial education classes—budgeting, home buying, financial repair classes.

RS—We served people with food pantry and food assistance access. Funding from Washington State Department of Agriculture.

RS—We get \$3,000,000 in in-kind food from Northwest Harvest and other organizations.

RS—Energy assistance. Spent \$35,000 for two homes on weatherization. Expecting additional funding for this from state department of Commerce. Some homes need too much repair to qualify for weatherization grants. So there's a rehab program.

RS—Utilities assistance is winding down because it's spring. We pay about \$400,000 in PUD bills every year. We're limited to \$1,200 per year and a \$800 deposit can take a big chunk out of the \$1,200.

RS—The went live with our new management tool—Cap60. The old tool didn't meet our needs. The new one is more sophisticated, the staff loves it, it's easier and doesn't break down.

RS—We're almost paperless. We scanned about 30 filing cabinets of files. We don't have paper files anymore. It's all digital. It's more efficient and saves a lot of room. It's also better for cybersecurity.

RS—We're also working with the food pantries on PantrySoft. Every pantry but one is now using it. The people who staff the pantries aren't particularly tech-savvy but they're using it and think it's great. Also working on succession plans for the pantries. The pantries are free-standing private non-profits staffed by volunteers, many in their 70s.

RS—Financial report for April—Revenue: \$785,000. Expenses--\$(*inaudible*). Receivables: \$335,000 so we're doing pretty good. 31 staff with a payroll of \$200,000 and 12 volunteers who have 300 hours in April. We expanded the board.

RS—Put out an RFP (Request for Price)for the roof. One response—just slightly under what we had to work with. Don't know the start date.

RS—New building initiatives. We'd like to have us all in the same place. Signed a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Colville Indian Housing Authority to partner with 72 housing units and buying 60 acres in Omak. It's in a great location—near groceries, medical, on a bus line. We're hoping it'll get needed infrastructure.

RS—We've been planning for a community resource center since 2016. It'll be for us but we're also looking for partners to rent space in the building. Trying to bring all the programs we work with all in one place instead of being all over the map.

RS—Met with Maurice Goodall about temporary shelter during emergencies—flood, fires, temperature, etc.

RS—Looking to get Green Certified building. Looking for funding. It would be a great resource for the community for years to come.

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RS—Reading from a user of the weatherization program. Snow caused a lot of damage to her back and front doors. With a limited income, CAC helped her a lot. She is very thankful.

RS—Also reads from answers to a survey they conducted reflecting happy clients.

RS—That’s about it.

CB—Meals for seniors—They’re delivering meals?

AH—I think there’s a miscommunication somewhere.

RS—One group delivers meals they’ve cooked and we’re trying to get them also to deliver food boxes. That would be more efficient. It’s being delivered now, but less efficiently.

RS—Maria Hinds is doing the food assessment, and that will be interesting to see. We’ve got food right here in Washington, but it needs to be processed, etc.

CB—I talked to Curt Dennison about planning on the Omak site. He thought WestEast was doing a good job.

RS—Thanks for your time.

Discussion about how an animal shelter could help homeless and victims of domestic violence.

-3:00—LJ—Just to let you know, I’ve got a resolution from the Prosecutor’s Office for a promotion for Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Thomas (*inaudible*). Also there are two appointment letters for the LTAC (Lodging Tax Advisory Committee) . One from Janet Warner and the other for Arnie Marchand.

AH—The Prosecuting Attorney needs to come and talk to us about the promotion.

LJ—How about tomorrow at 11:30-11:45.

AH—That’s good.

Adjourn for the day at 11:16