

## RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS

### OKANOGAN COUNTY

**APRIL 22, 2020**

The Okanogan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session REMOTELY at 123 5th Avenue North, Okanogan, Washington on April 22, 2020, with Chairman, Commissioner Jim DeTro; Vice Chairman, Commissioner Chris Branch; Member, Commissioner Andy Hover and Laleña Johns, Clerk of the Board, present.

#### **Possible COVID-19 Related Discussions of the Board**

Commissioners called in remotely to attend the meeting.

Commissioners discussed Okanogan County status and believed the status will change with many more positive COVID-19 test results.

Commissioner Branch stated he attended the Economic Alliance meeting, and it was announced by Community Action Council Executive that one death happened in the county. Commissioners believe there will be more positive tests.

Commissioner Hover would love to see, before May 4, the business sectors together to see which can open up the region and what businesses can do to provide social distancing practices with customers.

Commissioner DeTro said Sunrise Chevrolet already laid 35 people off, May 15 is his personal deadline. He'd hate to see him shutting down all three of his businesses down. Commissioner Branch said he doesn't want to use Chelan County's experience as a guide as there are ideas still to be discovered. Health Care professionals were asked if they wanted to serve on a task forced in the county to explore ideas would help legitimize it and the effort includes a well thought out process and to him that is worth doing. There will still be risk to that but at least it is a calculated risk.

Commissioner Hover would like to meet often next week to discuss with businesses and start laying something out. The county isn't just saying open up instead they are putting together a plan. Maybe get a few counties on board for the regional plan. Commissioner DeTro reminded that NEWC were meeting on Friday. Commissioner Branch doesn't agree with some of that. He believes Chelan, Douglas and Okanogan are more regional than NEWC for medical services. Commissioner Hover said the more counties that can get behind a unified plan, the better.

Kim Herriman said many wish to come discuss business on Monday. Commissioner DeTro asked if those folks can attend the meeting in person on Monday if we adhere to social distancing. The Clerk of the Board expressed her discomfort with that. Commissioner Branch isn't sure how many would have the ability to join on line and understands the Clerk's concern to be put at risk at this time. He knows they want to make a statement. He is opposed to allowing them to meet physically and is a violation of the order and if we rebel in that way we need to be aware. Commissioner Hover understands the clerk and her being uncomfortable with allowing people in the office physically and he wants to be safe, but he does like talking to people face to face and it is more difficult to express over the phone. He suggested allowing the spokesman and maybe one other into the meeting, but he does think it is difficult to express over the phone.

If the meeting is over zoom, then commissioners prefer a video meeting. Commissioner Branch said it helps when a decision is unanimous and asked that if he is opposed to a physical meeting then a video may be second best. It does require some technology and patience. Commissioner Hover

suggested the Chairman would need to have total control of the meeting with hand raising when someone wishes to speak. Commissioner Branch said repetitive statements aren't helpful since they understand the rest of the group feels the same way. Commissioner DeTro already discussed that with Mr. Herriman and he'll need to pick a spokesman, otherwise it won't go anywhere. The purpose would be to exchange ideas on how to do this effectively. Commissioner Branch said if there is a unified effort to do practical things that show we care about the spread of the virus, then he is for that. Commissioner Hover said he is talking about a planning process not about a discussion about what the constitution says. Commissioner would like Monday to discuss with business people then Tuesday discuss with public health about the plan.

Commissioner DeTro believes something will happen soon over the Franklin County action. Commissioner Branch said Franklin County's motion was contingent upon the action being legal and it was determined their action was not, so they will be meeting to address that. They want to show they are doing something whether it works or not does not matter, but our conversation here is a more responsible approach.

Commissioner Hover said many may not realize the RCW says public health is a pretty powerful in addressing public health issues. As a public health deal it is their responsibility to look at this, he wants to keep our economy up because when it goes bad it takes way longer to come back we don't have the tech businesses and little store just don't come back. Commissioner Branch said if we see a positive change then we would have a plan. The real impacts of the virus have not been seen here, but if people think we are being too cautious he hopes they are absolutely right, but working on the plan now is critical. We want to be ready and ahead of things in this regard. Commissioner Hover said he knows this is hurting people but May 4 is the goal date, by that date have a plan to then open the economy here with neighbors that are protective. Commissioner DeTro said we know we will lose businesses to what degree is unknown, if the Governor gets his way and this carries on until fall through election, Okanogan County will be in serious financial government will be in serious financial straits. Commissioner Branch said that aside we are on the path and if we make a mistake and the virus spreads more with our workforce affected then its more than just businesses. Something to keep in mind. He hopes the governor has health care professionals there advising him.

Commissioner Branch suggested improving our system to allow video of meetings. The ones that don't have video ability then special accommodations would be needed.

Commissioner discussed Water Planning Unit using video, but depends on whether they allow extension of our deadlines. Commissioner Branch explained what it would take to do that. Our contractor doesn't want to delay, they want to move forward, it so that is a concern. Commissioner Hover said how it can move forward if many cannot participate. Commissioner Branch cannot understand why we are so encumbered and others are not. Commissioner Hover said it has to do with internet services. With everyone streaming both cell and internet services is much poorer.

Central Services called in to help relay the capability of providing video meetings. Costs will come in to store the video and making it available to public. Commissioners discussed video meetings after the COVID for the long run.

Commissioner Branch said there is also the watershed planning unit meetings and thought some of those dollars from the grant could be used to upgrade equipment. The speakers in other meetings he has attended have clip on wireless mics. Cowlitz and Franklin counties are good examples of what Commissioner Branch would like to consider. Karen said she would be willing to see how they are doing it and see if can be applied here. Commissioner Branch said most of those meetings he has attended had someone facilitating the video and commenters aside from the Clerk of the Board. The Clerk relayed that it would be difficult for her to successfully perform both minute taker and video facilitator. Commissioners acknowledged her concern.

Commissioners discussed a couple fire districts who had grants in the works and what the status of those districts are now that the state has shut down.

Commissioners discussed a periodical in the Omak Chronicle from the commissioners. Commissioner Branch said he is willing can write something the other commissioners would like to review first.

The board adjourned at 2:45 p.m.