

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OKANOGAN COUNTY

APRIL 27, 2020

The Okanogan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 123 5th Avenue North, Okanogan, Washington on April 27, 2020, with Chairman, Commissioner Jim DeTro;; Member, Commissioner Andy Hover and Laleña Johns, Clerk of the Board, present.

Vice Chairman, Commissioner Chris Branch remote

Discussion -Requests to Open County For Business-Commissioners

Dan Higbee, Tanya Craig, Pete Palmer, Maurice Goodall, and public Kim Herriman present

Herriman thanked the commissioners for the opportunity to show support to the commissioners. There are a whole lot of people gathered outside and many who commented who support opening up the county in a responsible way accomplishes people being able to get back to work to feed their families. There may be less living here in the future if not. The group represents a diverse nurses, doctors, business owners, workers who work for businesses, and they are responsible. Restaurant industries and between Pateros and Okanogan there are twelve businesses closed, and they want to go back to work. People are nervous and scared, robberies, and consequences of being shut down. Besides the food service industries dentists, clinics, and hospital staffing is affected. Rigorous protocol to visit the hospital when he needed to go. The hospital was empty as they aren't letting anyone in there. Regular procedures they normally do there aren't allowed. The hospital is hurting because they cannot perform those surgeries. Many cannot actually see their doctor when they do need to go. Critical situations exist and people may not know about that they need lifesaving procedures for. The business owners can be responsible and letting the county have the opportunity to reopen. They want to show Washington State what they can do.

Commissioner DeTro explained information he had seen on YouTube that showed data comparing the COVOD to the regular flu. Think of the damage you are doing with child abuse, molestation, domestic violence, suicide, mental illness, and crime rate is going through the roof.

Commissioner DeTro explained that he wants people to be able to make their own decision on whether to open up or not. He feels they will be responsible they will either lose their business staying at home or they will lose their business because the state takes away their license because they opened.

Commissioner Hover explained we have seen three other county resolutions in the state refused by the governor. He feels it is important to understand what the governor's metrics are, get direct communication to him as local representatives of our people and communicate needs and data.

Tomorrow the Board will discuss what the plan to open would look like with the Public Health Official. Commissioner are gathering all the public comments to base their discussion on.

Constitutionality is equal for both the groups who want to stay closed due to COVID and those who wish to open responsibly. Give people a choice to stay at home if they are scared. Commissioner Hover said in peoples mind there is a choice but it boils down to a balance between those who are afraid and those who need to reopen.

Commissioner DeTro stated if Bill Gates develops a vaccine he won't take it unless he takes it first.

Commissioner Branch said we have an increase in COVID cases. He said the statistics are far from perfect. More testing would allow us to dial in to see what the data is and then adjust accordingly. If there is a plan it must have those things and that is the issue of violating the governor order and that is one thing. Every county has had a chance to speak to the governor and all of them have given ideas on opening up. A list of businesses that could open responsibly was offered to the governor's office and one way we ended up with a small part of construction being opened up now. Many counties sent letters and it will depend on what the results are. The fact is Okanogan County statistics is very little. If we had more testing and more targeted testing, and if we could we would find more cases of those who have it and those who had it and didn't know it. Opening businesses is a strategic move with communications with the governor and prove we are being responsible. He does not wish to willy-nilly open up the county with monitoring afterward. Mr. Herriman said the industry Cisco Food industries already has guidance materials about how restaurants can open responsibly. Many of the restaurants he deals with knows that.

Mr. Herriman said the death in the county was a young lady in her 40's. He knows the family involved and according to them the person tried to be tested at least once or twice and was unable to get tested on her conditions. Commissioner Hover said right now we got 500 test kits. Our health officer has done a great job in getting those. It is incumbent on hospitals to be able to test those who are sick or have symptoms. Can we do that right now? No, we cannot do that but hopefully we keep getting more tests. There are 55 dialed into the meeting right now, so he knows this is a big concern.

Commissioner Branch commented that health district has the responsibility to provide good health practices. He would like to create the means to get them back open which would entail another health official and that is there job. Just like opening up construction for open projects, there will be a need for inspections by the building official. Capacity will be needed.

Mr. Herriman said reach out to those who used to work for those department who have retired in order to enlist their help in helping businesses to reopen. When resources are offered we need to have the answers in our pocket like testing capacity. Our single public health official is at capacity. Mr. Herriman said restaurants want to open responsibly and he feels are willing to work with public health in order to work on reopening.

Mr. Herriman explained what business owners will do to keep with the social distancing and handwashing rules in order to open their business. Give people the opportunity to that. Some of the group outside are wearing masks. Mr. Herriman said he doesn't wear a mask, he doesn't shake hands, he uses hand sanitizers, and there is debate on how effective the masks actually are. The group did come with masks incase people wanted to wear there.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Herriman for trying to represent everyone and trying to do the best job they can do for everyone so it is helpful when people talk rationally about a plan.

Commissioner DeTro stated he spoke to Commissioner Karen Skoog as Chair of OCOG and those counties are forming a joint letter to try and get it out about this.

Mr. Herriman thanked the commissioners for the time to communicate to the commissioners' about this.

Briefing Among Commissioners

Commissioner Hover discussed existing construction projects that were in the cue since Thursday are okay. Commissioner Branch said that makes sense. They did not see a problem. To Commissioner Hover anything in the existing cue would be vested in application. Commissioner DeTro agreed with that. Mr. Higbee said there were seven recent applications pending, anything after Thursday would be.

Commissioner Branch asked about staffing, they are all in the office.

Lauri Jones was reached on the phone about those items in the cue being an existing project. She thought anything started/permitted by March 27 was, but she isn't as familiar with the building. Mr. Higbee and Commissioner Hover didn't see anything like that on existing in the proclamation.

Mr. Higbee said the City of Okanogan has hired a building official who begins on Monday. Mr. Higbee said he would be helping to get him oriented and familiar with the processes. Commissioner Branch said the plans don't need to have been submitted, just in place.

Commissioner Branch discussed enlisting additional public health officials for contact tracing. Ms. Jones explained plans on what a plan for opening up restaurants will look like. They must be legitimate plans and describe how those businesses will adhere to the rules to provide social distancing and hygiene. She is hoping we don't overload the hospitals due to the increase in cases. She is fearful that health care providers get sick and they take the whole hospital down. Coming up with what a safe way to open and what that looks like.

Commissioner Hover asked if there were others in the health care field that would be willing discuss tomorrow. She said yes there were.

Discussion Secretary of State-Cari Hall

Auditor Hall explained an update on unexpected grants that are elections driven specifically for COVID and the other for security for elections. She was sure about getting that one but a surprise about the COVID one. The first agreement for COVID is a specific agreement and requires the funds in its own interest bearing account as it comes all up front, any that doesn't get spent gets sent back. The county auditors in the state are coming up with ways to allocate or spend the funds. It is basically for elections to ensure health and safety of workers touching the ballots. There are many ideas being circulated. The SOS recommended security glass come out of the other grant. She let the commissioners know of her concern is that grant funds are all well and good to purchase equipment but the rei is always ongoing maintenance of the machine costs that could be a huge hit to the budget. It is \$159,000 to be spent by December 31, 2020.

The courthouse must be open for the elections. She would like to come up with ways to use the security funds for election security during the election that she will discuss with the commissioners once the plan is drafted. Ms. Hall explained some ideas to discuss further. She doesn't have a grant agreement yet for the security grant.

Commissioner Hover asked after tomorrow's discussion is the board interested in the a letter.

The board adjourned at 5:00 p.m.