

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OKANOGAN COUNTY

APRIL 6, 2020

The Okanogan County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 123 5th Avenue North, Okanogan, Washington on April 6, 2020, with Vice Chairman, Commissioner Chris Branch; Member, Commissioner Andy Hover and Laleña Johns, Clerk of the Board, present.

Chairman, Commissioner Jim DeTro attended the meeting remotely.

A telephone number and pin code was provided to the public via commissioners agenda which was posted online, on the commissioners' office doors and faxed to the media.

Emily Sisson and Isabelle Spohn, members of the public for Okanogan Watch Group attended remotely.

Briefing Among Commissioners

Commissioners discussed the pandemic and stated that Okanogan County currently has nine positive COVID-19 cases.

Commissioner Hover explained some concerns he is hearing due to nightly rentals continuing to be rented in the Methow and those are nonessential businesses. It was thought the rentals would be needed to care for COVID-19 patients. Chelan County drafted a letter to the nightly rental agencies asking them to make sure they were not actively renting their facilities out. He wondered if Okanogan County wanted to draft a similar notice. Commissioner Branch said if they are open and other facilities aren't then it appears to be abuse of the Governor's proclamation. If a letter is drafted, the Board thought the letter would be best drafted by Public Health as they are by default the lead agency on the public health crisis. Commissioner DeTro agrees but there is an inequity in all of it. Medical offices and massage parlors are open, but beauty shops and other types of businesses that support a vital economy are closed.

Commissioners discussed there being a lot of state and federal Grant dollars available to apply for as a response to this pandemic. The county is not prepared to handle new grant applications because the county does not currently have a designated experienced Grant Manager who can apply and manage the grants. The commissioners thought the wage costs of the position could be offset by the grant dollars. Commissioner DeTro said someone with experience, like the person who worked with Fire District #15 on their application, would be best.

Commissioner Branch said he'd like to first discuss with Public Health Official Lauri Jones, about what kinds of grants are out there. Commissioner Hover said he was thinking the position would be one person who takes on the management of all county grants to ensure compliance from start to finish. The Clerk of the Board suggested the position be a combined position that included Grant Administration and serving the Board as Administrative Officer because the board relied on the previous Planning Director to do the work, and now the work load is divvied out to whomever is capable and willing. The Board's Administrative officer tasks were previously being provided by the Planning Director, but now those tasks seem inappropriate for the new Planning Director to do. Commissioner branch added that the combined position of the past was not effective.

Public Hearing CDBG Public Services Grant-May be Rescheduled & Republished

Lael Duncan remotely present.

Commissioner DeTro opened up the public hearing noting that the hearing was to be adjourned to be rescheduled and republished in order to provide the public the options to attend remotely due to COVID-19.

Motion

Commissioner Branch moved to adjourn the public hearing. Motion was seconded. All were in favor, motion carried.

Motion

Commissioner Hover moved direct the Clerk of the Board to reschedule the hearing on May 12, at 3:30 p.m. and republish the proper hearing notice to include options for the public to attend remotely. Motion was seconded. All were in favor, motion carried.

Ms. Duncan stated this funding is for the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

Discussion Fairgrounds Situation

Commissioner Hover explained the fair queen's project for the little beef barn. The big beef barn doesn't want the bottle babies to be taken out of the big barn. They have a lot of issue with taking that portion of the barn out. He believes we should rethink the situation and not allow the bottle babies to go to the little beef barn as all the volunteers were not in favor of it. Commissioner DeTro said if it were communicated correctly so volunteers had input then it would be a different situation. He said it is best to let them know and discuss their thoughts. He would like to come up with an alternative idea let the queen go ahead and do the project, and some will go and some will stay. It would be voluntary. Scott helps with steers. Commissioner Branch requested that if the fair advisory committee would provide a written recommendation he would appreciate that. It is important to get the recommendation of the official advisory committee on record. Commissioner DeTro would like to make sure the supervisors gave their input too. We were not aware they were not properly informed. Commissioner Branch would like to have the documentation. If separate reports, it might help with coming to terms with an alternative when there is disagreement.

Commissioner DeTro asked what was wrong with the queen sponsoring the bottle babies in the big beef barn. She has another project alternative, said commissioner Hover. Commissioner Hover explained we have someone who wants to do good for the fairgrounds but then didn't communicate that with the barn superintendents about splitting it up. Ask the queen to integrate with the big barn people. Commissioner Hover said yes. Commissioner Branch deferred to Commissioner Hover's experience managing the fair situation due to his ongoing involvement but said it is incumbent on a written recommendation from the advisory committee. In the end the BOCC can make a decision.

Discussion Emergency Management Protocols – Maurice Goodall

Emergency Manager Maurice Goodall provided an update on the COVID-19 response among the agencies and when those notices will be published. Towns are not being listed but general areas are.

Commissioner DeTro asked whether or not there were cases north of Brewster. Mr. Goodall said there are four cases in Nespelem and that is north of Brewster, but he is not aware specifically. There is a high degree of certainty, said Commissioner Hover.

Facebook live posting will be on Wednesday, he asked if a commissioner wanted to relay a message. Some grocery stores and other essential businesses will be asked to give information. Both Commissioner Hover and Branch will be here and will offer some supportive information.

Commissioner Branch asked if the BOCC is satisfied with the situation and how Emergency Management is handling and responding to the situation. Commissioner Hover would like to be included when the Situation Reports are issued. He'd like to see the list of concerns of the day, etc....

Mr. Goodall said he likes to report what is happening on a daily basis. Mr. Goodall said the reports are not necessarily a public record. Commissioner Branch thinks it would be helpful to have something in the record showing Emergency Management is meeting with the Board regularly. There is a chain of command challenge, but that is going to happen anyway. Challenges need to be brought forth immediately to the BOCC so they can collectively deal with it. Mr. Goodall said he struggles with that as he prefers to independently update each commissioner separately.

Mr. Goodall discussed difficulties with opening an Emergency Operations Center when Public Health is at the top, it is difficult when input happens from an elected official and the information they give isn't consistent or is different from what others were saying. It is challenging. Commissioner Branch mentioned the financial connection between the county and the hospitals. The county collects Hospital District assessments with the property tax bill. Those funds support the hospitals. If the county were to delay the date the property taxes are due it could negatively affect the hospitals ability to function and provide for COVID patients.

Mr. Goodall explained supply resources and availability, it is terrible. Hospitals are in tier 1.

Mr. Goodall said Emergency management does not have a role in how hospitals operate.

Commissioners agree that Emergency Management should provide regular updates to the Board to include the situation reports. They discussed how quickly information changes and how people can receive information one second and how quickly that information can change the next.

Discussion-Public Service Emergency Funding Contract Amendment and Uses-BOCC

Ms. Diefenbach contacted Commerce about use of the funds for small businesses impacted by COVID-19. She said the result was that there would be No funding for workshops, training or financial budgeting services to small businesses. She said Commerce appears to be targeting low income folks to help them with wages and mortgages.

Ms. Diefenbach said at a recent ADO meeting a couple other organizations who ran micro enterprises through Community Action Councils already had small business loans in place.

Commissioner DeTro has a concern about Commerce interpretation of its uses of the funds.

Commissioner Branch asked Ms. Duncan on her proposed uses of the money. She responded with food, nutrition, and staff time, but they've cut way back on staff to protect them. She would need to discuss with her staff as to how client service needs are to direct the funds to what is intended. It must be an Urgent unmet need. Microenterprises would need to be looked at further but right now she is disappointed with Commerce's response. Also to be considered is that proper infrastructure be in place to disburse the funds to eligible recipients and purposes.

Motion

Commissioner Branch moved to accept and authorize the Vice Chairman Chris Branch to approve CDBG Public Services amendment "A" to the CDBG Public Services Contract No.19-62210-011 for the emergency COVID-19 funding. Motion was seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.

Commissioner DeTro would like Ms. Duncan, Ms. Diefenbach and the Clerk of the Board to work on the scope of work for use of the funds. Ms. Diefenbach believes she has a lot on her plate right now, and was encouraged to look into the other micro enterprise grant funds later on. She believes Community Action Council can use this funding right now, but she is focusing on other applications of businesses for SPA and has limited staffing. She is comfortable with OCCAC and the County working on the scope of work. Ms. Duncan said she is seeing requests come into her office due to COVID-19 impacts so she sees there is a need. Commissioner DeTro said he is not an expert in this field and trusts in OCCAC to use the funds accordingly for eligible purposes.

Approve Commissioners Proceedings March 31 April 1, 2020

Commissioner Hover moved to approve commissioners' proceedings of March 31 and April 1, 2020. Motion was seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.

Approve Consent Agenda

Commissioner Hover moved to approve the consent agenda items 1-4, as presented. Motion was seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.

1. Contract-2020 Soil Stabilizer-Roadwise Inc
2. Purchase Approval-Weed Spray Materials- Washington State Bid-Public Works
3. Appointment Resolution 20-032-CC North Central Regional Library District-Lisa Karstetter
4. A19 Voucher Req #2 March-Planning Only Grant-Points Consulting

Discussion Forest Service Supervisor Kristen Bail

Commissioner DeTro introduced the board to Forest Supervisor Bail.

Ms. Bail signed on remotely. She explained her work around the state to learn challenges. She discovered amazing groups that work with them and that Okanogan Wenatchee doesn't always deliver on its promises. She wishes to engage with those groups and continue to change the way we do things in order to meet expectations of active management. Focused on projects around the county and on keeping NEPA on time. Looking at how to build capacity and positions to address. Working on getting several positions back on the forest floor to develop proposals that are competitive and really move them forward. She is still learning.

Aware of the upcoming of the Tonasket Ranger District to the Colville District. Colville is known for successful active forest management and more similar to Tonasket ecosystems. The Tonasket is the only one that doesn't operate under the forest plan and has been a big contributor to sales. Looking at the five year plan update on forest to reflect the shift. They have yet made decisions on how those will happen but want it as seamless as possible.

Recommendations for the region and articulate what that means, will happen in the near future with Rodney. Tribal management was thoroughly reviewed by her, and they are thinking a decision could be coming soon, looking at several aspects and public involvement but the last was in 2015, so it has been over three years since public input was given. There were also some newer proposals that she did not understand if socialized with the region. She is going to take a hard look at it and determine the best way to move forward. There are decisions on WATV, road Closures

Commissioner DeTro said the travel management process and travel management plan has it backwards. The travel plan they want to adopted they want to close to all ATV and WATV then have them opened one by one. He has always expressed the opinion, take all three and four digit roads and use a categorical exemption for ATV and WATV because the roads were built to county road specs when they were originally built. Why must they be closed in order for engineer to look at them, why not make an exception for three and four digit roads? Ms. Bail agreed with Commissioner DeTro, but she is concerned about the process for roads analysis. She wants to engage in the region on this. The other part of the administrative transfer of the Tonasket District an opportunity for that landscape on its own with different community needs etc..... and things that make the process challenging and slower isn't the case there. She would discuss that with Rodney in order to streamline those decisions for Tonasket.

She does have concern about the types of decisions made, and thinks some should be made at landscape level planning rather than a two plus million acre landscape. Make sure they are hear from the hunting community.

Starting the process next year with funding from regional office with big public engagement.

Commissioner DeTro explained he was a smokejumper in the past. He discussed the challenges involved with the economic value in the Methow, to make sure the base stays there for the next project and he is behind that 100%. He has a friend that was a smoke jumper pilot and is now a commercial pilot and has helped to salvage a DC3 for the museum and offered to bring it to Winthrop this summer to have a lot of Forest Service overhead tour the base or get a ride in the plane. It would be a big impact and generate a lot of interest.

She has no interest in moving the base, plans are getting completed, and she is happy it will stay where it is.

Commissioner DeTro stated last year, forest wide, the list of Viper contractors were involved with a computer glitch and were refused or rejected. On quite a few of them and lost work because of it. They cannot apply for three years once rejected. He would like it rectified as he knows of others who were rejected and didn't have to wait the three years.

Commissioner Hover said the only federal officer for both Tonasket and Methow districts retired and has not been replaced and that puts additional burden on our Sheriff staff. There is opportunity to coordinate with the Sheriff's office for that. There is a contract recently signed for \$5,000, but that only covers overtime, not calls within the forest. He'd like to see one on the Okanogan side and one on the Methow side. Something will need to be considered. Ms. Bail said their law enforcement is managed nationally but she could advocate for it to be filled. If our folks in the Sheriff's office could articulate what additional help would look like that would be good to know in terms of funding so they can look at opportunities to expand the agreement. She also shared overall her budget looks flat at best, between pay raises, requirement agencies pay more of their share for retirement, which comes out to about 7% more for each employee. Working with their organizational staff for the purpose of transitioning and having that conversation with those close to retirement.

Commissioner Branch said when the mushroom season starts, law enforcement is needed to attend to those situations. Ms. Bail said one thing they are looking at is the mushroom season could congregate people. They hope to have a better sense of how long the governor's order is in place. They do recognize the challenges for both sides.

Ms. Bail thanked the board for the visit and she appreciated being able to hear Okanogan County concerns and she looks forward to meeting in person.

After the call was closed, Commissioner Branch said the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative discussed filing an amicus brief due to on an appeal of the USFS decision by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies on the Mission Project and Forest Plan Amendment. Commissioner Branch represents the County on this Collaborative and stressed the value of our participation.

Chelan County and other participants in the Collaborative are expected to file an amicus briefs and at a recent meeting were briefed by an attorney who represents the American Forest Resources Council (AFRC). The groups had previously reviewed and endorsed the USFS decision on the project. Commissioner Branch noted that the makeup of the forest collaborative includes diverse interests including environmental groups and forest industry. Commissioner Branch has been consulting with Civil Deputy Prosecutor David Gecas and asked that he to contact the Chelan County Prosecutor to learn more about the case. Commissioner Hover agreed that Okanogan County should also file an Amicus Brief. Commissioner DeTro noted that he felt more positive about the Collaborative after hearing this news.

The board adjourned at 4:20 p.m.