

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS OKANOGAN COUNTY

APRIL 12, 2021

The Okanogan County Board of Commissioners met in Regular session at 123 5th Avenue North, Okanogan, Washington on April 12, 2021, with; Chairman, Commissioner Chris Branch; Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Andy Hover; Member, Commissioner Jim DeTro and the Clerk of the Board, Laleña Johns, present.

AV Capture provided audio and video of the meetings held today, while ZOOM provided best audio accessibility and public interaction.

Review Commissioners Agenda and Consent Agenda

Commissioners reviewed their agenda and consent agenda. Commissioners asked the Clerk to invite OCCAC Lael Duncan to the discussion this morning with PUD officials regarding PUD accounts in arrears.

Motion Executive Session RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g)

Commissioner Hover moved to go into executive session at 9:25 a.m. for 5 minutes inviting HR Tanya Craig under RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g). Motion was seconded all were in favor, motion carried.

Executive session was extended at 9:30 a.m. for another five minutes.

Executive Session ended at 9:35 a.m. no decisions were made.

Briefing Among Commissioners- Discuss Individual Weekly Meetings and Schedule

Commissioners discussed their individual meetings attended.

Legislative Update- Pott & Associates

Zach Kennedy provided his legislative update. (attached)

Review Meeting Minutes

Commissioners reviewed their meeting minutes of March 29, 30 and April 5, 6.

Discussion Electrical Arrears Bills COVID PUD & Coop ARP

Lael Duncan, Scott Vejeraska, David Gohl, Kevin Black, Mindy Morris, Steve Taylor, Jerry Asmussen, Jennifer Short

Scott Vejeraska introduced several people attending today's meeting.

Commissioner Hover explained a previous conversation he had with Commission Vejeraska about OKPUD customers being in arrears. Community Action Executive Lael Duncan said OCCAC has access to \$2.8 million to help eligible applicants pay their utility and rent bills. OCCAC has generated notices in Spanish and English on Facebook, various newspapers and radio stations in the county. In all cases applicants must have experienced an impact due to COVID that the applicant attest's to. The funding cannot just be paid to the PUD's as the funds require an application to establish eligibility for distribution.

Commissioner Verjaska explained his biggest concern is that many people have fallen through the cracks who have no way to get help through OCCAC. OKPUD Mindy Morris provided that accounts are behind about \$144,000 with 216 customers past due. He was hoping the PUD could get direct help from the county's American Rescue Plan funds.

David Gohl from the Okanogan County Electric coop stated three of his customers are overdue amounting to \$13,000. (attached)

Nespelem Valley Electric Cooperative provided numbers that they have about \$80,000 in past due accounts which is growing at a rate of \$11,000 every month.

The PUD's guess is that people do not know how to access the Community Action funding. Many of the people are from within the burn area and then COVID impacts people's ability to pay.

Ms. Duncan explained the process Community Action goes through to assist applicants with the application, but people must make a telephone appointment before OCCAC can assist with the application. The PUD's said more effort is needed to get the word out about what help OCCAC can provide. It was suggested that the information be sent to customers with the PUD billings. Also, an event at the PUD could be scheduled, but because OCCAC is short of staffed, people would need to make appointments for the service. It was suggested that information be placed at churches, senior citizen centers, and the PUD's newsletter.

Ms. Duncan explained the CDBG CV grant allows provision of mortgage and utilities payments and another grant allows Rental assistance and back utility payments to those with low to moderate income.

Ms. Morris said the OKPUD is willing to help customers access the OCCAC funding, they could collect the applications. Jennifer Short said many times additional information is needed from applicants in processing applications and with the PUD wanting to help it may complicate the process more than if they had applied straight through OCCAC. Ms. Short stated the paperwork is done during a phone appointment. Most of it is filled in

and follow up paperwork is mailed or picked up. There is a drop box, staff can meet applicants at the door for completion. OCCAC is meeting needs as seamlessly and as easy as possible.

Commissioner DeTro asked if turning off power to those in arrears would generate a call to the PUD by the customer requesting their power be turned back on. The PUD would then relay where the customer can receive assistance with the bill. This would be used as a tool only.

The group thanked the commissioners for hearing the concerns.

Update- Planning- Director Pete Palmer

Angie Hubbard

The Planning Department's application status report was provided to show a 28% increase in applications received.

Director Palmer said the Dude Solutions software and demonstration needs to be scheduled. Other counties were called that have the program to see how their conversions went and how problems were solved. Most feed back was positive. Health Smart conversions won't be an issue. Commissioner Hover will attend the demonstration via zoom when it is set.

The WRIA 49 meeting will happen April 19 during the Planning update time. Smart water meters wanted to know if the county wanted to see a metering and data collection demonstration.

Director Palmer provided an update on whether the program would include the reservation. Tribe has their own conservation program and that coordination will be discussed at a later date.

The well tracking assumptions were discussed. Angie Hubbard explained she met with Parker to hear what the assumptions were and the explanation of how the numbers were derived. Commissioner Hover asked what steps were appropriate before publishing. Staff believes the report is ready to go, with the development of the March 2018 data for building permits. Commissioner Hover believes it is very sound data and will present the report to the Methow Watershed Council. He said WRIA 48 uses the highest consumption rate at 710 gallons per day in July.

Commissioners reviewed the contract amendments to the agreements with the Conservation District. Commissioners would like to see a list of the bulk number of parcels that are not state or federally owned, and not owned by county or city that are buildable.

Motion Conservation District Agreement Amendment

Commissioner Hover moved to approve the amendment between Okanogan County and Okanogan Conservation District regarding the Voluntary Stewardship Program and authorized the chairman to sign. Motion was seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.

Motion Conservation District Agreement Amendment WRIA 49 Planning Unit

Commissioner Hover moved to approve the interlocal agreement amendment between Okanogan County and Okanogan Conservation District regarding the WRIA 49 planning unit. Motion was seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.

Commissioner Branch stated he would be attending the OCOG meeting this afternoon.

The board adjourned at 1:57 p.m.