

Minutes of Meeting
Board of County Commissioners Town Hall
March 25, 2023
10:00 a.m.
Altar Church, 901 E. Best, Coeur d'Alene, ID

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chair Leslie Duncan and Commissioner Bruce Mattare met in a Town Hall format to answer questions from the public. Also present were Assessor Bela Kovacs, Prosecutor Stanley Mortensen, Clerk Jennifer Locke, Coroner Duke Johnson, M.D., Treasurer Steve Matheson and KCSO Undersheriff Brett Nelson. Also present was Ed Bejarana, of Idaho Speaks, acting as host. Commissioner Bill Brooks was excused.

- A. Call to Order:** Chair Leslie Duncan called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.
- B. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. Business:**

Discussion with the Public (Discussion)

Idaho Speaks host Ed Bejarana introduced himself and explained the format he would follow during the Town Hall. He said that he had a number of questions written on cards from the audience members and he would insert a couple of his own. Some questions would be asked of all the participants and some would be asked of a particular person.

To all participants: Please introduce yourselves and state what you want to accomplish in your office.

To Commissioners Leslie Duncan and Bruce Mattare: When will you adopt a better telecommunication ordinance to disallow cell towers in residential neighborhoods?

Chair Duncan remarked that the Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission were primarily responsible for land use issues such as this. She said that the Commission had been made aware of the BOCC's intent but had had a number of other, pressing issues with which they had to contend. She stated that the BOCC would encourage them to take it up once more and pursue it.

Commissioner Mattare explained that the Board of County Commissioners and the P&Z had rules imposed from the outside which they had to respect. He noted that he had prepared and submitted a lengthy document to P&Z outlining his thoughts on the matter. He said that there were federal laws which stated that people cannot be denied cell service, but most of the areas in question already do have such service. He assured those present that the Board of County Commissioners intended to listen closely to the will of the community and seek ways to accomplish it.

To Clerk Jennifer Locke: Regarding Election integrity: what are you doing to safeguard voting rights and voting decisions in Kootenai County?

To Clerk Jennifer Locke: HB232 proposed to change the distance from polling places at which electioneering could take place from 100 feet to 300 feet. What can you do to oppose it, if that is your decision? What would that mean for people who are trying to get their messages across on Election Day?

To KCSO Undersheriff Brett Nelson: There have been discussions nationally and locally of using other law enforcement agencies (with three letter acronyms) to specifically target parents who are protesting things taking place at school board meetings. What is the Sheriff's Office's take on these sort of tactics? What can voters expect when it comes time for one of these investigations to take place?

To Prosecutor Stanley Mortensen: Would it be considered electioneering when Coeur d'Alene school teachers are using school time, email and resources for work on the "Vote Yes" campaign for the school levies? If so, would you prosecute?

To all participants: What are your plans for holding our boundaries to represent us against all infringements to our rights as Idahoans that are currently under attack?

To Commissioner Duncan and Mattare: Are you adequately investigating the impact of developments on the Rathdrum aquifer, especially related to toxic chemicals?

Chair Duncan stated that high density developments were not generally seen on County land, since it had been subject to the 5-acre rule, which had become a County Ordinance. She explained that developers had to adhere to the requirement that only 1 septic system was allowed per 5 acres, with the only exception being if the development could hook into a sewer system. She remarked that this was not the only issue when considering chemicals potentially threatening the aquifer; there were road salt, weed killers and various lawn and garden chemicals used in developments also. She said that the Aquifer Protection District handled community education on these things. She remarked that there were places around the Lakes which were classified as "restricted residential" and permitted much higher density.

Commissioner Mattare commented that he had been surprised when he had learned that the term "restricted residential" actually referred to a high density zone, with homes on very small plots of land. He said that the County was, to a certain degree, an extension of the state government and had to obey certain constraints issued by the state. Because of this, he said that some problems could only be addressed by the Legislature in Boise. He added that, once land was annexed by a city, a different set of rules applied and the County had no say in how that land was used. He urged everyone to be aware of what candidates' positions were on growth before voting them in as mayors or city councilors.

To Coroner Duke Johnson, M.D.: How many deaths have there been from COVID vaccine? What is the main cause of death from the COVID vaccine?

To Undersheriff Nelson and Prosecutor Mortensen: Why were drag queens allowed to parade in downtown Coeur d'Alene in front of children? Do you feel this is acceptable?

To Clerk Locke: Do you spot check random precincts with a hand count to make sure it matches the machine count? If not, why not?

To all participants: Kootenai County is a \$100 million business. What is each Elected Official's Five Year Plan for Success? How are inflation and generally rising costs impacting your role with the County?

Chair Duncan remarked that last year was the first time she had actually voted in favor of a proposed budget. She stated that there were things that the County has funded which she does not feel fall within the proper role of government. She explained that there were certain services the County had to provide under state mandate, but the state had recently restricted County revenue by limiting the amount of new growth and URD (Urban Renewal District) it could take. She stated that she planned to focus on funding employees' pay again this year because employee retention was critically important to maintaining levels of service to the community.

Commissioner Mattare stated that, last year when the property values and assessments saw a steep increase, people thought that their property taxes were going rise in proportion but this was not the case. He reminded everyone that property taxes were driven by the County budget, not by property assessments. He said that there was a source beside property tax from which the County received important revenue: user fees. He suggested that fees charged to visitors should be the first thing the County increases in order to fund necessary services. He also urged people to demand that the lawmakers in Boise allow the counties more autonomy, not impose inappropriately one-size-fits-all limitations on them.

To Prosecutor Mortensen: There is legislation pending in the Senate, having passed the House, that will give you the ability to place an injunction on libraries and schools to end their distribution of pornography and obscene material to minors. Should this become law, will you commit to diligently pursuing actions to protect children in Kootenai County?

To Undersheriff Nelson: Sheriff Norris publicly stated that, if there were a government overreach or unconstitutional laws made, the Sheriff's Department would stand against the government to protect the residents of Kootenai County. The United Nation has been infiltrating Kootenai County for years, implementing "Smart Cities" infrastructure in our towns. This includes, but is not limited to, 5G, Smart Meters, surveillance and data collecting traffic cameras and newly proposed traffic mitigation centers under the guise of safety. What plans does the Sheriff's Department have to stop this foreign invasion by the United Nations and keep this agenda from continuing in Kootenai County?

To Commissioners Duncan and Mattare and Undersheriff Nelson: What has happened regarding banning wake boats and towing on the Spokane River?

Commissioner Mattare said he had spent a considerable amount of time on the Spokane River, on a Jet Ski, on a wake boat, on regular boats and just sitting on the shore observing

the traffic. He said he had concluded that the real problem on the River was congestion, although he admitted that some people did ride their craft far too close to docks and the shore, which caused damage.

Chair Duncan urged the public to attend or watch the Parks & Waterways meeting on April 5, 2023, during which these issues would be addressed directly. She remarked that these problems had been wrestled with for over ten years and pointed out that, no matter what laws were passed or not passed, enforcement was the primary key to improvement. She said that people behaved when they regularly saw Marine Patrol Deputies. She stated that she would support common sense legislation that the Sheriff’s Office could enforce.

Commissioner Mattare said that the phrase “excessive wake” as used in the County’s Ordinance was ambiguous. He stated that he felt a person should never have to wonder whether or not he or she was in compliance with the law; it should be immediately clear.

Chair Duncan said that the state law regarding wakes was clear and could be enforced.

To Prosecutor Mortensen: You promised transparency and that you would follow the law, yet politically motivated crimes continue to go unprosecuted, like the fire alarm that recently got pulled and threats of poisoning trustees on camera. When will you start prosecuting crimes in the City of Coeur d’Alene that the City Prosecutor declines to act upon?

Mr. Bejarana asked the participants to conclude with a positive statement related to their individual areas of expertise.

D. Adjournment (Action): Chair Duncan adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JENNIFER LOCKE, CLERK

BOCC SIGNATURE

BY: _____
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk