

Local

New Skills USA Club at BHS prepares for first competition

By Gina K. Swartz

Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Baker High School has a new club. Skills USA offers students the opportunity to advance in a variety of areas including art, drafting, engineering, and welding to highlight a few.

Tuesday, January 27, 2015 the club met in the new wing of the high school known as the Baker Technical Institute to begin discussion of their first ever competition.

The upcoming competition, being hosted by BTI is scheduled for Monday, February 9 beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the Baker High School Auditorium with a presentation by Sherry Cole, Technical Advisor for Eastern Oregon. 80 participants are expected with teams expected from Vale, Elgin, Halfway and Baker.

The teams will compete in Construction and Engineering with individual competitions in Automotive and Welding. Knowledge tests in the area of competition will also be administered to all competitors in the field in which they will be competing.

The February 9th competition will be the first held for the newly formed club and as Dave Frazey, one of the club advisors explained, "To compete at the state level they require resumes and a written notebooks with information, with this being our first time and not really knowing how things flow, we are going to eliminate that part and



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Dave Frazey (seated) talks with club members Taber Baldwin, Austin Rasmussen and Grant Ermovick.

do more of the hands on activities to learn how this all will work and just have fun. Not put a lot of stress on you. Realistically we can't go through and read 80 or so resumes anyway, we just don't have the manpower to do that."

Highlighting just how important these competitions are Frazey added, "Because this is our first year all of you will qualify to go to state. The nice thing about going to State is that's when it's the real deal and that opens up opportunity for scholarships. There will be people from industry there. They expect over 1,000 people from businesses, vendors and people will be talking to you looking at possible

scholarship status. So that is a great opportunity for you all to look into other areas as well things that may not be offered here at Baker High School."

Advisors for the club are Dave Frazey, Burke Smejkal and para professional Allen Makinson.

Club officers include Taber Baldwin, Eli Witham, Grant Ermovick, Austin Rasmussen, and Brady Nelson.

Although this is the first year of the club here, "It is pretty popular on the other side of the country," explained Eli Witham.

The club collectively will work on community projects as well. "I have spoken with Mike Kee at the City," says Allen

Mankinson. "We are talking about working with them on the new bike path. They are looking at not using pavement but possibly using compacted gravel, so we are researching compacted gravel. Roman roads were compacted gravel, we have a prototype put together, very similar to limecrete. It is supposed to be stronger than concrete at one-third of the weight and long lasting."

Judges for the competition will be local individuals with a background in the category they are judging. Presentation of awards will be held at the end of the competition day.

Planning Comm. gives Donaldson extension

By Todd Arriola

Todd@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The Baker County Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, January 22 at 6 p.m.

Present from the Commission were Alice Trindle, Chair, Randy Joseph, Commissioner, Suzan Ellis Jones, Commissioner, Chris Dunn, Commissioner, and Lauri Hoopes, Commissioner. Jim Grove, Commissioner, and Linda Wicker, Commissioner, were absent.

Planning Department staff present were Holly Kerns, Planning Director, Kelly Howsley-Glover, Planner, and Kevin Berryman, Planning Assistant.

The focus of this meeting was an extension request, EXT-14-102, from applicant Gregg Donaldson, a registered agent of Dyke Creek Park, LLC, for property located near Oxbow.

Trindle asked if there were any challenges to the jurisdiction of the Commission to hear the matter, and no challenges were stated. She asked if there were any conflicts of interest or biases to be declared by any Commissioners, and Hoopes stated that, for the public hearing segment, she would need to recuse herself, since she had been an active Planner during the time of the initial application, and she would provide testimony.

The minutes from the November 24, 2014 meeting were approved with a motion from Dunn and a second from Jones, after Jones noted a correction was needed to the date of today's meeting.

Hoopes was seated with the public as Kerns and Howsley-Glover contacted Donaldson, who's located in Colorado, via telephone for a conference call with the Board. Howsley-Glover gave an introduction, saying, "Briefly summarizing the staff report (given to Commissioners earlier), Mr. Donaldson, on behalf of the property owner, Iron Dyke Creek Park, LLC, applied for an extension (EXT-14-102) for Baker County case PA-07-005, a plan amendment approved in 2008, which created the Homestead Recreation Limited Use Combining (HRLUC) Zone."

Trindle introduced herself and asked Donaldson to state his name and address for the record, shortly thereafter allowing him to provide testimony.

"I'd like to request a continuance on my application until late April," Donaldson said. He said that between the time of the application and now, circumstances have changed, and there is a potential buyer, though the sale hasn't been made yet, so he wishes to leave options open to him.

Kerns informed the Commission that April 23 would be the available date for a continuance.

With the possibility of a continuance, Trindle said, "Mr. Donaldson, would April 23 give you sufficient time to know where your buyer is going?" Donaldson replied it would.

Joseph talked with Donaldson, noting the length of time the process has taken from the beginning, and the complications with it. Part of the property, Tax Lot 100, was sold to Mark and Lisa Butler of Oxbow

in 2013, who own property adjacent to it. They weren't successful in purchasing the rest of the property, Tax Lot 900, which is currently under contract with a potential buyer.

Joseph said, "I think it's time for the Planning Commission to step away from this," noting how two extensions had already been granted up to this point, and how the situation has changed since the original application, with break up of the property, with camping site and RV site issues, etc.

Donaldson explained that more time was needed to pursue development options on the property, that he's unsure about the potential buyer's intentions. He said he's only had control of the property for about a year and a half, though he's had involvement with it periodically for the last eight years.

Kerns discussed with the Commission the details of what would happen with or without an extension granted, and the zoning details of the property.

Joseph stated his desire to hear testimony that day, with agreement from the rest of the Commission.

Trindle asked Donaldson if he had any more testimony to provide concerning a possible continuance to the April 23 meeting, and he stated his intentions with or without a continuance of the hearing on the matter.

Howsley-Glover entered Exhibit G, a letter of opposition for the extension from Mark and Lisa Butler, into the record. The basis of their testimony is that no visible development has been observed with the property since 2008.

Bill Nagi, a landowner adjacent to the property, provided testimony about vandalism to his orchard, and area disturbances.

Stacy Nagi, Bill's son, also provided testimony concerning vandalism, issues with different activities in the area, and the lack of development.

Hoopes testified in support of the extension, explaining her involvement with the application, and the effort throughout the period. She said Donaldson had expressed his intentions initially, and they were a guide, and not assumed to be "absolute."

Donaldson was allowed a chance to provide further testimony, and he requested that the Commission not make a decision on the extension until April 23.

There was a discussion once the testimony was completed, and Jones said, "It's a tough one. I'm leaning toward giving him the extension at the meeting in April," stating factors such as the work already completed, and the need for more information concerning the application. Dunn agreed with Jones.

Joseph made a motion to deny the continuance to the April 23 meeting, with a second from Trindle. Trindle and Joseph voted in favor, with Jones and Dunn opposing, and the motion did not carry, since Trindle's vote is used in the event of a tie. Jones made a motion for a continuance to the April 23 meeting, with a second from Dunn, and this motion carried.

After a recess Trindle was unanimously re-elected as Commission Chair, and Hoopes as Vice Chair.

New Huntington City Council

By Eileen Driver

Eileen@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Three newly elected council members, Carol Allender, Rhonda Bronson and Cindy Deck, along with re-elected Mayor Travis Young, took their oath of office, administered by City Recorder Tracy Mclean at the Huntington City Council meeting on Monday January 26 at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Young then said, "We would like to thank the retiring council members for their service to the City and we welcome the new Council members to the Council table." The new councilors were immediately thrown into the thick of local politics and city administration with a preliminary report on the annual financial audit by the firm of Nichols & Mitchell, the cities Auditors of Record.

The auditors reported that the City has slowly but finally recovered from the financial difficulties it suffered 10 years ago with the misappropriation of funds by the former administration, but still has some work to do on adding new



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L-R: Rhonda Bronson, Travis Young, Carol Allender (back) and Cindy Deck.

line items to the budget to further clarify where the current money is being spent. The auditors also stressed the importance of being more pro-active in collecting past due water and sewer bills.

The Council then moved on to the regular business of the City with a review of the Baker County Sheriff's report of activities in Huntington, a report from the Public

Works Department and an annual report of the Fire and Medical Department's activities.

The Fire Department also discussed with the council their proposal to put up for sale three surplus vehicles and the purchase of one new vehicle to replace them, which they believe, will better serve the needs of the Medical Department and save the City money in the

long run. After careful consideration by the Council this proposal was approved and will be set into motion as soon as possible.

Also discussed was the updating of the City employee handbook, the upcoming sewer project and grant and the possible need for repairs to the VFW Hall's walk-in cooler and the re-keying of the locks on that building.

First Friday commissioners event to start in February

Commission Chairman Bill Harvey will be holding "First Friday with the Commissioner" starting in February.

The first event is Friday,

February 6, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse located at 1995 Third Street, Baker City.

This time will be used to allow the citizens to visit with the Commissioner about issues impacting Baker County.

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