

Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

Freedom of religion, not from it

It's frustrating to see the same old ridiculous dead horse being beaten at County Commissioners meetings.

What a blatant waste of everyone's time.

We thought the issue of prayer at public meetings was laid to rest years ago after the same individual created the same controversy at City Council.

Particularly when the lone complainant has even less of a legal leg to stand on than ever.

Last year, a Supreme Court ruling upheld the Constitutionally-based notion that public officials could begin public meetings with

prayer—pointedly Christian or otherwise.

After all, the issue is freedom of religion, not from it.

At the start of these meetings, when the invocation is offered, no one in the room is ridiculed, excluded, singled out, or otherwise ostracized.

A moment of prayer is given.

Those in the audience may choose to sit through these moments with no action. They may observe a moment of silence. Read a book. Play on their iPhones. Offer up their own prayers in their own way to whichever god they choose. Or join in!

Instead of recognizing a positive, we suppose there will always be those who will take the slightest gesture and turn it into something offensive.

We're fairly certain our three Baker County Commissioners and those who attend their sessions each week have better business issues on which to expend their energies.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

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County Commissioners hold government-to-government meeting with Forest Service



Brian Addison / The Baker County Press.

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest supervisors (from left) Deputy Forest Supervisor Chuck Oliver and Forest Supervisor Tom Montoya meet with Baker County Commissioners Mark Bennett, chair Bill Harvey, and Tim Kerns to discuss government-to-government relationship and needs of county.

BY BRIAN ADDISON
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The Baker County Board of Commissioners convened a government-to-government meeting on Wednesday, September 30, with United States Forest Service supervisors to begin to bring federal land management plans into consistency with the interests and land use plans of Baker County. The three county commissioners, chair Bill Harvey, Tim Kerns, and Mark Bennett met with Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor Tom Montoya and Deputy Forest Supervisor Chuck Oliver.

The meeting included five main areas of focus specifically targeting the lands and resources within Baker County and managed by the USFS within

the burn-area this fire season.

The first portion of the meeting dealt with a review of damage assessment made by the USFS including timber stands and the need for salvage logging projects, ongoing threats to wildlife, an assessment of missing and damaged fencing, loss of forage for livestock and the process for reseeding of pasturelands, the likelihood of future flooding, erosion problem and locations, and the opening and repair of roads for restoration.

Approximately 150,000-acres of private and federally managed land within Baker County burned this summer and of that total, the fires burned through about 48,000 acres of land managed by the USFS: the Windy

Ridge/Cornet Fires burned 30,000 acres of USFS land, the Eagle Complex Fire through about 12,000 acres of USFS land, the Dry Gulch fire through about 2,300 acres, and the Eldorado Fire burned 3,700 acres of USFS managed land. Within in those burns many millions of board feet of timber were burned along with fencing built by private land owners that border the national forest.

“Astronomical, the scope of the thing is tremendous,” Harvey said of his assessment of the areas burned.

The USFS currently works on the task of hazardous tree removal near roadsides.

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— GUEST OPINION —

What's a u-value?

By Susie Snyder
Special to The Baker County Press

For over a decade Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative's (OTEC) Energy Services team (ES) has enthusiastically helped members lower their electric bills and conserve energy by upgrading from old, leaky windows to high efficiency models with a u-value of .30 or better. OTEC members who took advantage of BPA's financial incentives satisfied the program criteria by proving their primary installed heat source was electric and they were purchasing new windows that with low u-value ratings.

So, what is a u-value? Windows are rated according to the degree of heat loss measured from the middle of the pane going outward; hence, the lower the U-factor, the better the window insulates the building. The U.S. government standardized the rating method and now requires this information to be posted on all new window products. High efficiency windows can be double or triple pane, argon gas or air filled, or a myriad of other types that meet new efficiency ratings, but the key is to check and compare u-values.

Unfortunately, BPA recently announced the window program will be changing as of October 2015 and the rebate will be greatly reduced, almost half of what it has been. This decision came following a study performed by the Regional Technical Forum (RTF), a committee formed by the NW Power and Conservation Council, and only after years of monitoring the actual savings derived from retrofitting windows as compared to what was originally projected. The RTF's primary job is to develop standards to verify and



Submitted Photo

Susie Snyder is a 15-year employee of OTEC, has a B.A. in Business and is a NWPPA certified Home Energy Auditor/Inspector. She has been helping OTEC members find ways to conserve energy for over 6 years.

evaluate conservation savings.

This group of experts keeps the Council and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) updated on whether changes need to be made to any conservation program, so the funding is put to best use. Unfortunately, this one did not live-up to the expectation, so future rebates will be cut in half of what they have been, with the likelihood the program will be phased out altogether in the near future.

Although, the change may lower participation for the future, many of OTEC's members have already benefitted from the program. And, regardless, it's still a good idea to remove leaky windows and replace them with higher efficient models. OTEC's ES team will continue to be enthusiastic about helping members make smart energy choices and find ways to make the member's project affordable. Call us for more information about other rebates that help you to conserve.

“Enthusiasm is the electricity of life.”
— Gordon Parks

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Cell towers and pigs...

To the Editor:

Recently I attended a Planning Commission meeting open to the public regarding two 100-pig farms that a company is pushing to establish within Baker City's city limits. Current regulations restrict pig farms within city limits to 38 pigs. Before starting, a lawyer representing the city, speaking a dialect of English I barely understood, advised those in attendance that FCC (Flatulence Communication Commission) rules prohibit any testimony that includes pigfarts (pig grunt farts) and that any testimony including pigfarts would be rendered inadmissible despite the fact it has been proven that pigfarts can be harmful to humans. Besides, those opposed wouldn't have time to mention pigfarts since anyone who opposed the two new farms would only be given three minutes each to state their case.

Meanwhile B.S. Snickerdoodle, representing the company, was given all the time she needed to totally baffle everyone in the room. Snickerdoodle maintained that not only a 100-pig pig farm smelled no different than a 38-pig pig farm but alluded also that the company's pigs had

very little smell at all and would hardly be noticeable, especially at night so long as one remained upwind. She explained that although the 38-pig pig farms supply Baker City with almost all the bacon the town's residents need, current trends demand high quantities of pig grease because an increasing number of people are chewing the fat. Asked if this was a local or national trend, Snickerdoodle admitted it was a national trend.

Opposition testimony to the 100-pig pig farms, despite the three-minute restriction, offered a wide latitude why Baker should not entertain large farms from pilots flying over Baker might be overcome by smell, and what if everyone in town wanted to build a 100-pig pig farm? The lone local voice in favor noted insightfully that the only residential area that the two farms might affect was high-density housing full of low-income people who obviously didn't and wouldn't care. No vote was taken. The meeting was adjourned. Snickerdoodle promised to return with an updated set of tampered facts. The issue remains pending.

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