

Local

HBC has big plans for 2015

By Gina K. Swartz
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

“I raised my hand,” jokes Historic Baker City (HBC) Program Manager Jeff Nelson. “I thought, ‘I could get this done,’ It does take a lot of my time—events just take a lot of time, but I enjoy it and I see the impact of the events. It brings a lot of commerce, and that is what we want.”

Nelson is joined at HBC by board members Larry Abell, Rosemary Abell, Paul Dolan, Michelle Dollar and Dan McQuisten.

HBC was established in 1982 and was an official member of the National Trust of Historic Preservation, National Main Street Programs.

While HBC used to be managed through an EID, a self-tax paid by everyone in the historic district, the EID funding the program “failed a year or two ago so there is no longer any funding,” explained Nelson. “So, we had a couple people say let’s just do a volunteer membership. Right now we have close to 20 members. The memberships range from a \$350 yearly Penthouse level membership to a \$50 yearly ground-level membership in which the member helps by volunteering with some of the events.”

Unfortunately, through some previous mismanagement, there is repair to be done, but as Nelson says, “Some community trust was lost but in a way it’s kind of a blessing in disguise because now we can go outside the historic district and get memberships where before we were confined to just that historic district.

“In the Main Street program there are different levels. And of course, Baker City was one of the first in Oregon so it was always the shining star. Now without having a paid full-time program manager, we are on a lower level. We act and do the same functions but we are just classified differently.”

“Someday, I’d like to have that back as a full-time paid position, where we would be listed in all the historic district guides as a premier. For years and years we were listed as the premier. We weren’t a performing Main Street. It takes time. We’ll get there,” he added.

Nelson feels that in time HBC will be a success again but right now they are barely making money with sponsorships for the events. Insurance is one of the reasons.

“Event insurance is so expensive—that is what the problem is. It’s several thousand dollars to put on these events, but it is a lot easier for a 501c non-profit like HBC to get the event insurance,” he explained in reference to The Baker County Chamber of Commerce bowing out and handing over events they



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Jeff Nelson of HBC holds up signs thanking event sponsors who helped fund and/or participate in the Christmas Tree decoration purchase and annual Twilight Parade.

once sponsored. Nelson, with the help of the HBC board and a mass of volunteers, has stepped in and taken on the responsibility of organizing and gaining sponsorship of many of the local community events in an effort to keep traditions and those cherished special events alive.

Nelson went on to explain more about where he’d like to see HBC in the future. “My goal is to have 60 members by the end of 2015. I think this year we have made such a good impression on what HBC can do that we should get that membership, I’m hoping. Our main purpose, our goal is to get the community involved in HBC, that is the way it was supposed to be established.”

Of the HBC’s community contributions, Nelson said, “If you notice the downtown, Main Street, you see new preservation awnings, new facades. Probably 80 % of those were done with HBC money and Leo Adler grants. I believe it’s around 22 different buildings.”

Recently, the Eltrym Theater got new neon lights. “Within a week they had been broken. HBC stepped up and bought all new neon for them so they didn’t have to do it, paying for it entirely,” Nelson said. The Eltrym is owned by HBC Board member Dan McQuisten and wife Terry.

Another big project HBC has been involved with is some restoration on the VFW building.

According to Nelson, “This year is their 100-year anniversary. Last year a 50/50 HBC grant helped supply paint. Now HBC paid 100% toward a new sign and the installation of that sign.”

Familiar events now on the plate of HBC include The Hell’s Canyon Motorcycle Rally.

“Last year we ran an information booth. We handed out over 3,000 pamphlets and flyers, a lot of them about local businesses in town. Last year

there were two information booths, one for Baker City and one specifically for the Rally. This year we want to combine them and just have one big booth. We will make a few changes, anytime you do an event that big you’re bound to have a few hiccups. But it’s such a money-maker,” Nelson said.

HBC also has involvement in Miner’s Jubilee, which they are planning to participate in again this year. They have sponsorship of the Duck and Beaver races, one of HBC’s largest fund raisers, and the infamous bed races.

Last summer HBC was able to participate by selling tickets for the baseball tournaments. “If we have the chance of doing that again, that would be awesome,” Nelson said.

A big event for HBC this past year and one that will be continued was The Taste of Baker. “That was a big success. We had beautiful weather, it was one of our best taste events.” According to Nelson over \$5000 was generated in approximately two hours during that event.

“That was a lot of commerce in those two hours. A lot of restaurants were pretty happy,” he said. Nelson invited everybody, whereas before it was just the historic district that was invited to participate.

He continued, “We had The Sunridge and The Truck Corral come down. Next year I’m hoping to pull in 10th Street. The 10th Street businesses. They have their own thing going on so they didn’t come, but I want them to come down and we will put them up in Court Street Plaza. Last year we had a DJ there, music playing with gorgeous weather so everything was win-win.”

The Downtown Trick or Treat on Halloween is another important community event HBC is involved in. “I’d like to see some more donations some sort of funding for candy. The merchants put out about \$100-\$150 in candy. That’s a lot for these businesses

and it’s mostly those in the first couple blocks of Main street. We have close to 3,000 kids that come down for that. I’d like to find a way to help out the merchants a little bit, maybe set up a fund raiser to help buy the candy,” Nelson explained.

This year with HBC was able to get new lights for the Baker City Christmas tree—\$2,200 worth. “The transient lodging tax helped out with a small grant, Oregon Trail Bullet Factory, Valley Metal and Heating and Mary and Sid Stiglich—plus we had donation cans at every HBC event all that helped to accomplish the goal. People around town said the tree could compete with the tree in Portland. I said, ‘Hey, we can deal with this!’” Nelson said with a laugh.

He’d like to get the Community Choir and maybe different church choirs to take turns singing around the tree every weekend next year. “So every weekend we’d have something going on right there at the tree in Court Street Plaza. Maybe even have someone like the boy scouts serve hot chocolate,” he added.

One of HBC biggest fund raising events is the Home and Parlor Tour.

Nelson felt this year’s tour was a stellar success. This year there were 11 homes on the tour that for the first time ever featured The Leo Adler House.

“We had a really good homes tour this year. I do however wish I would have had more funding to advertise in the Portland area because we did have some people from Gresham and several from John Day. It’s a big event for us and was tough to get together but it was great,” Nelson said.

Although Nelson’s contract with HBC expired December 31, 2014, he is expecting a renewal, not foreseeing anyone else wanting to take the job.

“It’s been fun,” Nelson reflected

Brooklyn

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The District has made the decision to temporarily suspend the existing panic button devices until hard covers can be produced, hopefully preventing another false alarm. A senior, Grant Ermovick, who attends the Baker Technical Institute at the high school, is designing the covers—and over 200 of them will be needed.

Wegener added, “We still very strongly believe the system is a great concept and it certainly works effectively to call in assistance. However, we are not comfortable with inadvertent triggers. We are actively developing new cases and believe we are very close to production.”

“Cost is not as important as our desire for safe schools,” he went on to say, “But cost will be relatively minimal. And, no, we do not anticipate a change in the system, per se; we do anticipate better management of the trigger the system.”

According to Wegener, the new cases should be ready to implement sometime in February.

OTEC nominating committees set

The board of directors for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) appointed the director nominating committees for Baker, Union and Grant Counties. Appointed to serve were:

Position 4 (Union County) held by Austin Bingaman: Donna Beverage, Dale DeLong, and Russell Lester.

Position 5 (Baker County) held by Aletha Bonebrake: DeeDee Clarke, Fred Warner, Jr., and John Wilson.

Position 6 (Grant County) held by Gary Miller: Alva Conlee, Gail Enright, and Mitch Saul.

The committee is responsible for interviewing and nominating candidates for the 2015 OTEC Board of Director Elections. Those interested in running for the OTEC Board of Directors, please contact the nominating committee members in that county.

Each director’s term of office is for three years. The election will be completed at the annual meeting scheduled for May 2, 2015 in John Day.

A copy of the bylaws describing the terms of the office and qualifications needed to serve on the 9-member board of directors and well as a conflict of interest policy are available online at www.otecc.com. Committees must submit their nominations by January 30, 2015. Members wishing to petition for placement on the 2015 Board or Directors Election Ballot should contact Joan Macy (541-524-2831) or Jim Horan (541-524-2858) for the petition and conflict of interests forms

Nominations by petition must be filed no later than March 2, 2015. The petition must be signed by the candidate and at least 50 OTEC members qualified to vote. In addition, there must be a request that the candidate’s name be placed on the ballot.

Museum project grants available

The Oregon Heritage Commission is offering grants for qualified museums to support museum collections, education and heritage tourism. Awards typically range between \$1,000 and \$8,000, and occasionally higher. Qualifying museums can apply for a variety of projects including archival boxes, records documentation, exhibits, brochures, school programs and more.

While the grant applications are online, they are simple and there is plenty of support.

“Our goal is to support museums of all sizes, all over the state in their valuable work. We provide assistance in the application process,” notes Kuri Gill, the grants program coordinator.

Carla Burnside of the Harney County Historical Society recently noted the importance and ease of the grant for their quilt documentation and storage project. “The process of applying for the grant was very easy, she said. “It will help us preserve important textiles in our collection.”

Oregon Heritage grants programs staff is happy to discuss projects and review applications in advance. There will be grant workshops on project planning and grant writing. A two-hour workshop will be in Salem on Feb. 3. A one-hour webinar will be available on Feb. 5.

The Heritage Commission is comprised of nine people representing Oregon’s heritage and geographical diversity who have been appointed by the Governor. There are nine advisory representatives from state agencies and statewide organizations. The commission’s mission is to secure, sustain, and enhance Oregon’s heritage by ensuring coordination of heritage initiatives by public and private organizations; advocacy on its behalf; education of the public about its extent and value; and promotion and celebration of its diversity.

To learn more about the grants, visit www.oregonheritage.org or contact Kuri Gill at Kuri.Gill@oregon.gov or 503-986-0685.

OSP releases stats

OSP has released its Preliminary New Year’s Holiday reporting numbers:

Oregon State Police troopers reported an uptick in the number of DUII arrests made over this New Year’s Holiday period, December 31, 2014, at 6:00 p.m., to January 1, 2015, at 11:59 p.m.

During the 2014-2015 holiday period troopers arrested 37 drivers for Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants, up from 2013 when troopers arrested 29 impaired drivers.

Troopers responded to 35 crashes this year, 2 of which involved one or more fatality.

Cascade Natural Gas

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“We outgrew our location on 10th Street. We had the office on 10th but had to store the equipment in a separate location. We have upgraded to a more mod-

ern facility,” said Hanson.

Cascade employs a total 14 workers in the eastern Oregon region and five in Baker City. There are no immediate plans to add to the workforce in Baker City, according to Hanson.

“The local manager will do a walk-through on January 8 and plans to move-in in the latter part of the month,” Hanson reported.

Local construction company Sid Johnson & Co.

built the new facility.

The new operations center sits on and provides customer access off of Broadway Street with a listed address at 2100 13th Street.