

Local

New Board of Commissioners holds first meeting

By Todd Arriola

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its regular, bi-monthly session on Wednesday, January 7, 2015, at 9 a.m., in the Council Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

Present from the Board were Bill Harvey, Chair; Mark Bennett, Commissioner; Tim Kerns, Commissioner; and Heidi Martin, Executive Assistant.

The session was called to order, Harvey's first as a new member of the Commission, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

During the Citizen's Participation segment of the session, the first order of business, Harvey addressed Ken Anderson, a retired mining geologist, engineer and consultant, and said, "Are you ready to go work in the mountains, and get us some mining going?"

Anderson replied with, "Any time, as soon as the snow gets shallow enough."

Arthur Sappington, Jefferson Mining District Coordinating Office, was present to speak about the emails he sent to the Board, concerning the lack of representation of rural communities. He also mentioned a video he sent to the Board, concerning a governmental coordination effort conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, but noted that it actually depicts the wrong way to accomplish that goal.

With a motion from Bennett and a second from Kerns, the minutes from the December 22, 2014 session were approved.

Martin discussed with the Board the Baker County Microenterprise Project, Project Number M14008, a \$40,000 grant, from the Infrastructure Finance Authority (IFA), located in Salem. Through this grant, Baker County would contract with Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) to provide microenterprise training services to assist low- to moderate-income individuals with starting, stabilizing or growing a microenterprise. Classes would include financial fit-



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Sheriff Mitch Southwick (at far left) gives his department update to the County Commissioners.

ness, bookkeeping, marketing, customer service, and many other topics.

The grant application was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and a second from Bennett.

The Board approved Order No. 2015-102, Appointing A Justice Of The Peace Pro-Tem For The Baker District, with a motion from Bennett and a second from Kerns. The Board appointed Damien Yervasi and Jeremy Thamert to the position, during the absences of the Honorable Don Williams, current Justice of the Peace, for a term to expire on December 21, 2015.

Baker County Sheriff Mitch Southwick was present to give the Board a Sheriff's Department update. He provided copies of statistics concerning daily inmate roster averages, monthly bookings, releases, and holding totals, and monthly male and female inmate totals, for 2014. He also provided the Board with inmate daily roster averages, forced releases, and total bookings for the years 2005 through 2014.

Southwick said that last year, he saw one of the highest daily average inmate counts he can remember, around 40 (there are 45 beds). Normally, that count would be around 30 to 35. He did say, however,

that crime is fairly consistent in the county, and it has not risen proportionally with the inmate count increase.

Southwick said, "As budget rolls around, our building out there is about 30 years old, now, I think, and we've been having a lot of major issues." He said that last year, two water heaters and a washing machine had to be replaced, all commercial units. He also said that around \$1,500 was spent on roof repair, and the department is in the process of obtaining bids to replace it.

Southwick said that the Parole and Probation building, now located near the jail building, cost between \$30,000 and \$40,000 to complete work on last fall, including foundation work, etc.

Southwick provided the Board with an estimate for the purchase of a new rescue sled, called Snow-bulance, from MicroConn, Inc., for Search and Rescue purposes. The total amount for the sled, which can be used with either supplied wheels or composite skis, is \$8,380. The department has another rescue sled, which was used at least four times last year, and Southwick said he had desired to purchase another one. With a motion from Bennett and a second from Kerns, the purchase was

approved.

The Board, acting as the governing body of the City of Unity, approved Order No. 2015-101, Appointing A Budget Officer For The City Of Unity, with a motion from Bennett and a second from Kerns. The Board appointed Harvey to this position, for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

The Board, acting again as the governing body of the City of Unity, approved Resolution No. 2015-01, Granting Signatory Authorization To Designated Baker County Representatives, with a motion from Kerns and a second from Harvey. Bennett, City of Unity ex officio Administrator, and Jason Yencopal, Baker County Office of Emergency Management, were appointed to be authorized to sign on behalf of the City of Unity.

The Mayor and Councilors of the City of Unity resigned on June 30, 2010, and since that time, the Board and the Baker County Clerk have been attempting to recruit council members.

The next regular Board of Commissioners session is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, at 9 a.m., in the Council Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

Historic property grants available

The State Historic Preservation Office is offering grants for work on historic properties and for archaeology projects. The annual grants fund up to \$20,000 in matching funds for preservation projects.

The Preserving Oregon Grant can fund preservation of historic buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Work may include non-maintenance preservation like window repair, roof work, foundation projects, and plumbing and electrical needs. It can also fund significant work contributing toward identifying, preserving and/or interpreting archaeological sites.

The Diamonds in the Rough grants help restore or reconstruct the facades of buildings that have been heavily altered over the years. The grant's purpose is to return the buildings to their historic appearance and potentially qualify them for historic register designation (local or national).

Preservation office staff is happy to talk with applicants about potential grant projects and review applications. 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. To learn more about the grants and workshops visit www.oregonheritage.org or contact Kuri Gill at Kuri.Gill@oregon.gov or 503-986-0685.

City has open board vacancies

In January of 2015 the City of Baker City is looking to fill multiple positions on several boards and commissions. The City of Baker City will have the following vacancies in January: Airport Commission (3) three vacancies; Planning Commission (4) four vacancies, Historic District Design and Review Commission (1) one vacancy; and the Public Works Advisory Committee (2) two vacancies. Length of terms will depend upon which committee the applicant has applied for. Please contact the City Recorder for additional information.

To apply go to www.bakercity.com and complete the online application under boards and commissions or see Luke Yeaton at City Hall located at 1655 1st Street. Paper applications can be returned to: Attn: Luke Yeaton - Human Resource Manager/City Recorder, 1655 1st Street Baker City OR, 97814, Fax: 541-524-2024, Phone: 541-524-2033, Email: lyeaton@bakercity.com.

COPS program adds service

As a service to the citizens of Baker City, members of the Baker City Police Department Citizen on Patrol (COP) Volunteer Program will begin conducting weekly checks on community members with special needs. This will primarily be for senior citizens, but may also include other vulnerable adults.

The goal of this program is to provide personalized assistance to those citizens who are in need of supplementary support. This program is not intended to supplant the citizen's current familial and medical support, but to augment them. The COPs offer this service to assist with the basic needs of these citizens, enhance their quality of life and if needed, direct them toward the appropriate service providers in our area.

For those citizens who would like to be a part of this program and receive weekly visits, they, or a family member, will need to fill out a registration form that can be found at Community Connection, the Baker City Police Department, or on our website: <http://www.bakercity.com/departments/police>.

Once completed, the form needs to be delivered to the Baker City Police Department at 1768 Auburn Avenue in Baker City.

These checks are scheduled to begin in January of 2015.

Feds to focus on sagebrush, grouse

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell issued a Secretarial Order calling for a comprehensive science-based strategy to address the more frequent and intense wildfires that are damaging vital sagebrush landscapes and productive rangelands, particularly in the Great Basin including Oregon. Goals include reducing the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, addressing the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species, and positioning wildland fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response.

"Targeted action is urgently needed to conserve habitat for the greater sage-grouse and other wildlife in the Great Basin, as well as to maintain ranching and recreation economies that depend on sagebrush

landscapes," said Secretary Jewell.

The Secretarial Order establishes a top-level Rangeland Fire Task Force, chaired by Interior's Deputy Secretary Mike Connor, and includes five assistant secretaries.

The Task Force will work with other federal agencies, states, tribes, local entities and non-governmental groups on fire management and habitat restoration activities.

The Order builds on wildland fire prevention, suppression and restoration efforts to date, including the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, which provides a roadmap for achieving "all hands—all lands" cooperation, and the President's wildland fire budget proposal to change how fire suppression costs are

budgeted to treat extreme fire seasons the way other emergency disasters are treated.

The accelerated invasion of non-native grasses and the spread of pinyon-juniper, along with drought and the effects of climate change, increased the threat of rangeland fires to the sagebrush landscape and the more than 350 species of plants and animals, such as mule deer and pronghorn, that rely on this critically important ecosystem. The increasing frequency and intensity of rangeland fire in sagebrush ecosystems has significantly damaged the landscape on which ranchers, livestock managers, hunters and outdoor recreation enthusiasts rely. This unnatural fire cycle puts at risk their economic contributions across this

landscape that support and maintain the Western way of life in America.

Efforts to conserve and protect sagebrush habitat are the centerpiece of an historic campaign to address threats to greater sage-grouse prior to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's court-ordered 2015 deadline whether to propose the bird for Endangered Species Act protection.

State and private lands, which make up a significant portion of the priority and general habitat for the greater sage-grouse, are also critical for the species. As a result, the Department is working in an unprecedented partnership with the states to provide strong habitat protection and conservation measures on the lands they administer.

Family survives early morning house fire

According to the American Red Cross Cascades Region, one adult and two children were displaced by a January 3 residential fire that occurred in the early morning hours at 3010 Campbell Street in Baker City.

Some witnesses reported two adults and two children were evacuated from the burning building around 2:30 that morning, and said the flames were visible two to three blocks away.

The Red Cross provided help with lodging, food, clothing, shoes and infant supplies, comfort kits and information about Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health Services.

According the Baker County web site page for the Assessor's office, the home is owned by Andrew Storer and was built originally in 1920. The Assessor's Office also has the home listed at just over \$19,000 in value.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation. The names of those who survived the fire were not available before this story went to print.