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The Baker County Press

Friday, February 13, 2015 • Volume 2, Issue 7

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Council calls special session over marijuana dispensaries



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

After hearing from Police Chief Lohner (far right) and others Tuesday, Baker City Council will meet again next week in a special session to learn more about their legal options regarding either banning or allowing marijuana dispensaries in Baker City.

By Gina K. Swartz
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Ordinance #3336 Regulating Commercial Marijuana Operations was the topic that filled Council Chamber at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

Before discussion began

Mayor Mosier addressed all in attendance. She said, "I believe that the seats in Council chambers are full because of this item on the agenda. I know that there is a lot to say and a lot to discuss. I thought a lot about how to structure this discussion before coming

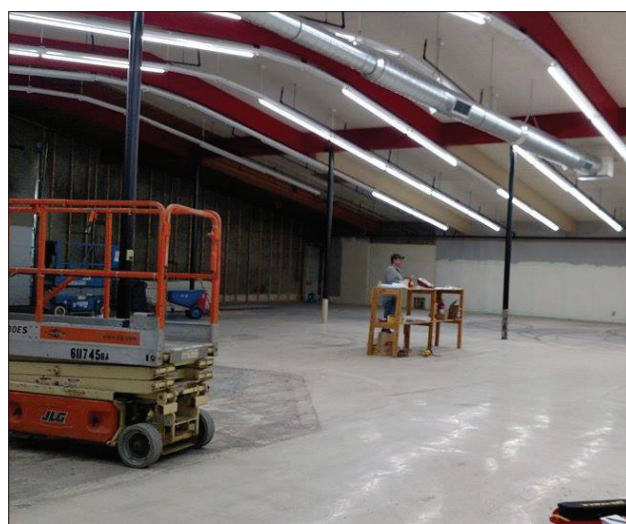
in. I think the best way for the Council is to first have Chief Lohner lead the discussion with information about the ordinance. Then I'd like to take citizen comments, hear concerns and to get community feedback. After we get citizen feedback we have our

city attorney here to give a report on the ordinance and legalities followed by council comments and any questions for Chief Lohner or the City Attorney."

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Ace Hardware to move

SCOTT THATCHER SAYS NEW, LARGER LOCATION OPENS BY MAY



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

Thatcher's Ace Hardware is currently renovating its future location, which will provide more space.

By Gina K. Swartz
Gina@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Cruising down Resort Street in Baker City, drivers will pass the empty building that most recently housed Del's Feed and Farm Supply.

The building has sat empty since the closing of Del's, but within the last couple weeks, residents have seen movement in the building. Contractor trucks have been around, lights have been on and the windows have been covered. If one gets close enough, however, the paper in the window shows the Ace Hardware logo.

The not-so-tightly held secret is out: Thatcher's Ace Hardware is moving to Resort Street.

Said Scott Thatcher, owner of the Baker City Ace Hardware, "I had been looking at the building and working on this since about last May; it just took a while for it to all evolve. We signed the papers on January 16. We signed at 10:00 a.m. and by noon we were in here working. We originally were shooting for an April 1 opening but as things come up, we have delays. I just don't know. I'd like to be going by May 1, preferably mid-April."

See ACE HARDWARE / Page 3

Cop killer remains in prison

BAKER CITY POLICE CHIEF TRAVELS TO SALEM PAROLE HEARING

By Kerry McQuisten
News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

A gathering of police chiefs from around Oregon traveled to Salem to sit in the audience January 27 and witness the parole hearing of convicted John Day cop killer Sidney Dean Porter, age 55. Their goal? To prevent Porter's pending release, which had been scheduled.

Among that eastern Oregon group were Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner, Chief Brian Harvey of La Grande who initiated the movement, and Chief Richard Gray of John Day.

When asked why he attended, Lohner said, "It was the right thing to do. I felt very strongly that Porter should not be released and that the family deserved to see support of the Baker City Police Department."

In the end, Porter's bid for parole was rejected, and his next parole hearing extended out five years. An

extension between two and 10 years was possible.

In 1992, Officer Frank Ward responded to a domestic violence incident in John Day, at a residence where he had been previously on a similar call. Once at the scene, he heard Porter's wife screaming for help as her husband assaulted her. Ward was overpowered by the 6'5" Porter who repeatedly struck him in the head with a piece of firewood. The officer died of a broken neck and severe head trauma.

A psychological evaluation from December 2014 determined Porter presently has "a severe emotional disturbance that constitutes a danger to the health or safety of the community."

Lohner said from his observations, "Porter is a manipulator who seems to try and rationalize every poor decision he has made, rather than holding himself accountable at any level."

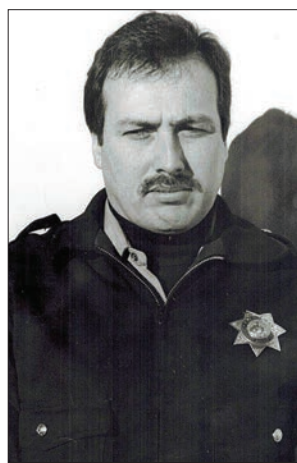
The Board also found

that Porter has an inability to express remorse or empathy, and a lack of understanding of the factors that led up to the murder.

Said Lohner, "The voice of the minority can be heard and can make a difference when those who believe in standing up for what is right make a hard push for justice. When Chief Harvey first made our small group of eastern Oregon chiefs and sheriffs aware that Porter was going to be released—that already-scheduled release was only three months away—from our small group evolved a statewide campaign to keep Porter in prison, which was successful!"

This hearing marked the first time Ward's widow, Debra, spoke in person against Porter's release.

Porter, who was accompanied at the hearing by his attorney and sister, will appear in front of the Parole Board again in 2020.



Submitted Photo.

Officer Frank Ward.



Submitted Photo.

Sidney Dean Porter smiles in his mugshot.

ORP chair candidate comes to Baker City

By Kerry McQuisten
News@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Bill Currier, the current vice chair for the Oregon Republican Party (ORP), visited Baker City Wednesday afternoon for a quick visit with county-level party leaders.

Currier has thrown his hat into the ring to run against challenger Wally Hicks for the soon-to-be-vacant chair position.

Currier is also the owner of a 20-year-old IT business, and serves as mayor of the town of Adair Village.

Outgoing ORP chair, Dr. Art Robinson, recently announced that he would be stepping down after his term ends. Robinson assumed the role to finish out former chair Suzanne Gallagher's term after she resigned in the face of a recall effort. Robinson travelled through eastern Oregon over the weekend, stopping briefly for a fund raiser in Harney County to stump for Hicks.

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Friday Mostly sunny with highs in the lower 50s. Clear at night with a few passing clouds and a low around 34.

Saturday Warmer and mostly sunny throughout Baker County with highs in the upper 50s. Expect a low at night around the freezing mark.

Sunday Sunny with clear skies and highs in the lower 50s. Expect temperatures just below freezing at night.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.



Official weather provider for The Baker County Press.

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