

Local

Econ Dev Committee recaps recent projects, events

By Todd Arriola
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The Baker County Economic Development (BCED) Committee met on Friday, February 13 at 3:30 p.m., in the Commissioners Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

Present were Craig Ward, Committee Chair; Bill Harvey, County Commission Chair and Committee Vice Chair; Greg Smith, BCED Director; Julee Hicks, Sherri Smith and Phil Scheuers, Assistants, BCED; Mike Kee, Baker City Manager; Richard Langrell, Baker City Councilman; Debi Bainter, Executive Director, and Jeff Nelson, Board Member, Baker County Chamber of Commerce; Timothy Bishop, Baker County Tourism; Arthur Hill, Vice President, Blue Mountain Community College Small Business Development Center (BMCC SBDC); Gene Stackle, BMCC SBDC Advisor; and Bob Savage, BMCC SBDC Advisor.

The meeting was called to order, and shortly thereafter, the minutes from the last BCED meeting were approved, with a motion from Kee, and a second from Langrell.

The first order of business was a Commission Chair update from Harvey. As the new Chair for about six weeks, he said he didn't have much to update the group about. He said it's looking like an early spring, and hopefully, there will be enough water supply later this year for irrigation.

"Right now, I'm here to see where we're at with some things. I've read some of the minutes, and I've read some of the past reports that you've been working on," Harvey said.

Hill gave the group an SBDC update, explaining first the display he brought to the meeting, including financial modeling, complete assessments of businesses, evaluations of businesses, and information about workshops. He said these services are part of the resources the office is currently working on. He explained that the process to assist businesses with startups in the area is a comprehensive one.

Hill said that nine-week Oregon Department of



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The BCED meet last week to rehash recent events and discuss those that are upcoming.

Transportation (ODOT) contractor training will be offered online starting in March.

Harvey and Kee discussed some concerns with business startups and electrical service deposits, and Kee said it's possible these payments could be made over time.

Harvey said he applauds the efforts to bring in new businesses, but he also expressed some concerns about dispersing grant money to too many business startups. He said that established businesses also need assistance and incentives, like tax breaks.

Harvey mentioned the Eastern Oregon Mining and Aggregate Development Summit held in January in Baker City, stating that he thought there was excellent information presented at the event, and the region's focus should be removing barriers concerning natural resource access and development.

Hill said that in March, there will most likely be a follow-up event to the summit.

Stackle said he had a conversation with Arthur Sappington, Coordinating Officer of the Jefferson Mining District, and that the SBDC is willing and able to offer assistance with mining business issues. He said the SBDC is currently assisting 20 clients in various stages of business development, including those involved with healthcare, arts, lawn and garden, and construction ventures.

He said the portion of the building where Rite-Aid is located that is being remodeled isn't leased cur-

rently. All of the fixtures removed were shipped to various Rite-Aids, so those weren't available for use, but Stackle said the coolers units were still available.

Stackle also said that topics and presentations are currently in the works for Pub Talk, a business learning series which is offered at different area businesses during each month.

Nelson talked about taking a tour of Baker Technical Institute (BTI), praising the program, which is headed by Jerry Peacock, and he explained some of the activities, like horticulture, construction, and a nursing program providing training for students who are able to apply for a Certified Nursing Assistant (CAN) license by the time they graduate. He stressed the importance of assisting the younger generation with career training and business opportunities.

Savage discussed the offer by the Training and Employment Consortium (TEC) of Baker City to provide computer training to inmates at the Powder River Correctional Facility, but he said the computers need upgraded operating systems.

Bainter said, as part of a Business Roundtable event, there will be a tour of Eagle Cap business school on March 11, from 8 am to 9 a.m., and a tour of BTI at 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. that same day. She also said that Baker City is expected to be the start and finish point for Cycle Oregon this year.

Bainter encourages everyone to attend the Legislative Hotline, held at the Baker County Extension Office, on the first

Wednesday of each month, from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. This is an opportunity to discuss important legislative issues with Senator Ted Ferrioli and Representative Cliff Bentz, via a live camera feed.

Langrell voiced concerns about the marijuana dispensaries issue, and the group discussed business licenses and fees, and enforcement of those licenses. This was a discussion with ideas and comments, and it was decided to continue at a later date.

Bishop said the exciting news of the year is that last August, the BCED came on board as funding partner for a tourism video production project, with Travel USA and Travel Oregon, to produce two videos, with the Wallows, Baker City and Baker County as the centerpiece.

Smith said the BCED worked with 18 businesses last month, explaining the different types of assistance offered to each. He said there is a great opportunity to receive business loans in Baker County through financing and BCED programs.

Smith informed the group that the Director of the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), Vicki McConnell, has resigned, and the Deputy Director, Thomas Ferrero, was tragically murdered earlier this month, leaving the organization with a lack of leadership for now, causing concerns for Smith and others.

Smith also talked about some potential new businesses, including a firearms manufacturer and a leather manufacturer, which would be great for Baker County, he said.

Kee asked Smith about the property located in the Farewell Bend State Recreation Area, including the former hotel and service station, and Smith said that the owner has stated interest in further development.

Savage mentioned the potato contract issue, and Ward said that a contract was negotiated with J.R. Simplot on February 11 for the purchase of 800 acres worth of potatoes from area producers, however, the remaining 3,000 acres worth is still a big question mark at this point.

Scheuers discussed the program Oregon Prospector, an online resource in connection with BCED, with detailed information about business real estate in the area.

Auxiliary scholarship open for apps

Baker City is once again offering a \$1,500.00 scholarship. To be eligible you must be a graduate of a Baker County High School or a current resident of Baker County, who will be at least a sophomore in college by September, 2015.

The scholarship will be awarded to a student who is enrolled in a health care profession. The application for the scholarship can be obtained from the Auxiliary Desk in the front lobby of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City or from a member of the Auxiliary Scholarship Committee, Peggy Payton, Chairman, 541-523-6603, Marilyn Bloom 541-523-2750 or Betty Rouse 541-523-5563.

The applications must be returned to the committee by April 15th, 2015. The recipient will be notified by May 20th, 2015. The scholarship check will be sent to the recipient's college where it will be credited to the students account.

Father, son sentenced for poaching

BOISE, Ida. —A father and son from Baker City, Oregon were recently sentenced for their roles in an 2014 opening day elk poaching case that began with a call to the Citizens Against Poaching (CAP) hotline.

On October 25th, 2014, Justin Gyllenberg (33) shot and killed a spike bull elk in the Hells Canyon area, then continued shooting, downing a second and much larger 6X7 bull elk. Shortly after the elk were killed, Justin's father Brent Gyllenberg (60) joined his son and both men began field dressing the two bulls. The younger Gyllenberg placed his nonresident elk tag on the larger bull, while the senior Gyllenberg tagged the smaller bull.

The Gyllenbergs were not the only ones on the hill that day. The poaching incident was witnessed by at least two elk hunters, one of whom called the CAP hotline. Both witnesses described the poaching incident in detail, stating that a third large bull was also hit by Gyllenberg, but was last seen limping away from the area.

In the days that followed, Idaho Fish and Game conservation officers Randy Martinez and Rusty Anderson obtained additional details from the witnesses, then traveled to Baker City, Oregon to interview both suspects. Teaming with Oregon State Police officers, Martinez and Anderson conducted interviews with the younger Gyllenberg who ultimately admitted to shooting both elk, tagging the second animal, then transporting the animals back to Baker City.

Martinez seized both elk and the Remington 7mm ultra magnum rifle used in the poaching incident. Citations were issued to both men including exceeding the bag limit, possession/transportation of an illegally taken elk and transfer of tag to another. Shortly after, the pair appeared in Adams County Court before Magistrate Judge John Meienhofer. In early January, the two men returned to the courtroom for sentencing.

For his part in the poaching incident, Justin Gyllenberg was fined \$600 and assessed civil penalties and processing fees totaling \$1,000. Along with 12 months of probation, his hunting privileges were revoked for two years.

Brent Gyllenberg pled guilty to his transfer of tag charge and was fined \$300 and assessed civil penalties and processing fees totaling \$1,000. Along with 12 months of probation, his hunting privileges were revoked for one year.

The two elk and the rifle used in the poaching incident were forfeited. The elk meat will go to the local food bank for distribution to those in need, while the elk antlers and the rifle will likely be sold at auction with the proceeds going to the Fish and Game general fund.

ODFW hires new director

SALEM, Ore.—The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission has chosen Curt Melcher as its choice to be the next director for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Melcher has served as ODFW Interim Director since September 2014. Melcher was among three finalists being considered for the position following a national search for candidates. The other finalists were Edward Bowles, Fish Division Administrator, ODFW; and Krystyna Wolniakowski, former Director, Western Partnership Office, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Melcher will report to the Commission and manage a department with more than 1,100 employees, and a biennial operating budget of \$345 million. Melcher is a native Oregonian, who graduated from the University of Oregon with a B.S. degree in Biology. He has devoted 28 years of his career to the protection and management of Oregon's fish and wildlife. Melcher has served as the Deputy Director for ODFW, accountable for all Fish and Wildlife programs leading over 1,200 employees. He was appointed the Interim Director in September 2014.

"I'm excited and humbled at the thought of this opportunity," Melcher said. Melcher would replace Roy Elicker, who retired in September 2014 after serving seven years on the job.

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