

# Local

## County: reservoirs higher than last year, new technology server room in the works

By Todd Arriola  
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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its bi-monthly session on Wednesday, February 18, 2015, at 9 a.m.

Present were Bill Harvey, Commission Chair, Mark Bennett, Commissioner, and Tim Kerns, Commissioner. Standing in for Executive Assistant Heidi Martin was Karlynn Dolby, Baker County Payroll Administration Benefits Coordinator.

Also present were Jason Yencopal and Gary Timm, Baker County Emergency Management, Dan McQuisten, Baker County Facilities Maintenance Foreman, Mitch Southwick, Baker County Sheriff, Jeff Nelson, Baker County Chamber of Commerce, Beverly Beach and Dennis Spence, Blue Mountain Translator District, Bobbie Danser and Ed Hardt, Eastern Oregon Mining Association (EOMA), Steve Bogart representing Kathleen Martin, Baker County Museum Commission, Arthur Sappington, Jefferson County Mining District Coordinating Office, Suzette Sappington, and Cynthia Long, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), retired.

The first order of business was Citizen Participation, and Sappington was given the floor. He talked about coordination issues concerning Josephine County and the BLM, and mentioned some information he was sending the Board via email. He also mentioned that Jefferson Mining District discussed mining issues with Representative Bentz.

Long discussed with the Board her thoughts about the Blue Mountain Forest Plan with the Board. She said that she attended a meeting last week with individuals representing Forest Access For All (FAFA), the United States Forest Service (USFS), County Commissioners, and others interested parties, and the consensus for future meetings concerning the plan and the associated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to have interested parties contact government agencies

involved with a date, time and place for hosting the meetings. She suggested Anthony Lakes Ski Resort as a possible meeting location.

Bennett emphasized the negative aspects of the MOU as written, and the efforts to communicate effectively, largely unheard by the involved government agencies. He said he's not opposed to talking with the USFS, but the MOU would not be signed as written, and something different needs to happen in order to have progress.

Nelson discussed marijuana dispensary issues with the Board, specifically, concerning business licenses, and mentioned the City Council meeting Tuesday night. Nelson asked the Board whether the licenses would be issued city-wide or county-wide, and Harvey responded that he was opposed to issuing them county-wide. He listed some problems he sees with dispensaries to Nelson, including safety, law enforcement issues, issues with neighbors, and contradiction with federal law. Harvey said further discussion would be needed. Bennett also mentioned the contradiction with federal law.

Nelson, who's also a Board Member of Historic Baker City (HBC), said activities are getting underway for the year.

The minutes from the February 4, 2015 Commission session were approved.

Yencopal and Timm gave the Board an Emergency Management update, with Yencopal speaking first. Yencopal discussed the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), and talked about the training and exercise requirements to retain that grant. He said the training requirement was met in December, and the exercise requirement has also been met, including the activated alarms at Brooklyn Elementary as drills.

He said the Emergency Operations Plan is being reviewed and updated, and two hazard mitigation plan meetings are required this year, both of which are currently planned. Yencopal mentioned the Preparedness Fair, scheduled



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

At left, Jason Yencopal and Gary Timm discuss wildfire strategies and a preparedness fair.

for May 16, 2015, and he gave a drought update to the Board.

He said that Phillips Reservoir is at 28 % capacity, and at this time last year, it was 16 % of capacity; Unity Reservoir is at 62 % of capacity, and it was at 29 % capacity last year at this time; Thief Valley Reservoir is at 100 %, and it was the same at this time last year. He said that eastern Oregon ranges from a moderate drought in the north, to severe drought in the central region, to extreme drought conditions in the southern region.

Timm discussed the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy, which is one of three national pilot projects, involving a collaborative effort between federal, state and local agencies, in northeast Oregon and southwest Washington, to address the issues of catastrophic wildfires. He said that his focus is improving wildfire response, on both government and private lands, including reducing fuels (trees, brush, etc.). The plan locally includes the east face of the Elkhorn Mountains, and includes a variety of lands, including high-risk, government, and private. The project allows fire prevention agencies to interact more thoroughly with residents, which is one of many benefits, Timm said.

McQuisten spoke to the Board about a bid proposal for new equipment in the Technology Server Room at the Baker County Courthouse. The bid total amount is \$5,884, from Baker County Heating & Cooling, LLC, and includes a Mitsubishi 24,000 BTU Commercial Grade P series air conditioner. The proposal was approved.

## Thrivent Financial holds open house



Meghan Andersch / The Baker County Press

Paul Turk stands outside his office door.

By Meghan Andersch

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Paul Turk of Thrivent Financial hosted a First Friday Open House event this month. The event featured the photo artwork of Slade Elbert and included a silent auction to benefit CAS (Court Appointed Special Advocates who advocate for children in foster care). The event raised about \$500 for CASA.

Thrivent Financial is a member-owned Fortune 500 financial services nonprofit organization and offers such services as life insurance, investments, and retirement accounts. As a fraternal organization, membership is open to Christians seeking to live out their faith.

Turk opened his office the beginning of last September and is the only Thrivent Financial representative in eastern Oregon. As such, Turk said he covers the area from Joseph to Jordan Valley.

Turk said the service most clients take advantage of is retirement planning, including planning for what the future will look like, investment products, and distribution of legacies. He said though he is happy to answer product-specific questions, this is not the type of organization where you would come in to buy a product off the shelf. Instead, representatives work with members on developing a holistic view of how to reach their goals and dreams.

Turk explained the mission of Thrivent Financial as helping take members from a place of striving to a place of surplus so that they can live generously in their communities.

The company itself, as a nonprofit, directs a large amount of funds back into the community, including supporting organizations such as Habitat for Humanity or providing support for member charitable endeavors.

Formerly employed in customer service positions at Bi-Mart, Ace Hardware, and as a pastor, Turk said the best part of his job is serving people in the community. He enjoys the opportunity to meet needs in the lives of members by helping find solutions beneficial to them. Turk said he is blessed to be working with people in a beautiful area he loves.

Turk's office is located at 2101 Main Street on the second floor of the Basche-Sage Mall, Suite 204. His regular office hours are 9-5, Monday to Friday, though he is flexible to accommodate the needs of members. He can be reached at 541-519-2178.

## Masquerade ball set for Halloween

The Baker County Press and the Geiser Grand hotel are teaming up in an exclusive partnership to bring Baker County the event to beat all events on Halloween night 2015. With this gorgeous historic hotel as the venue, the two businesses are throwing a masquerade ball inspired by the Anne Rice ball thrown annually in New Orleans. The event will be an alternative to the typical party scene. Only 200 tickets will be sold. Expect music, carriage rides, portrait photography, a book signing, celebrity appearances and some other surprises. More information will be available in a few weeks when tickets go on sale.

### BEEF MONTH DRAWING!

We're busy celebrating Beef Month here at The Baker County Press. Did you know that between our editorial board, sales staff and reporters, we have three generations of cattle ranchers involved in putting out this paper every week? If you renewed or took out a new subscription this month, you've already been entered into a drawing for a free package of our own tender, juicy, home-grown-in-Baker-County steak! Subscribe between now and the end of the month to be entered!



# A NIGHT AT OLD AUBURN

Saturday, February 28, 6 pm—10 pm  
At Baker Heritage Museum, 2480 Grove, Baker City

## Baker Heritage Museum's Annual CASINO STYLE FUNDRAISER

Tickets \$28.00 until Feb. 21 then \$ 38.00  
Dinner by Baker Truck Corral Catering,  
Live Entertainment, Casino style gaming, Bingo  
1860s Apparel Competition with prizes

Tickets Available at: Betty's Books, J Tabor Jewelers, Chamber of Commerce,  
Inland Cafe, Baker Truck Corral or [www.BakerHeritageMuseum.com](http://www.BakerHeritageMuseum.com)  
Casino Punny Money is an additional cost.

Sponsored By:

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Britt Sand & Gravel CCB#91014—Baker Vision Clinic, PC

Event produced by:

www.teamcasino.net

Let's make history! Deal me in!