

Local

City Council: licenses, dispensaries

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“We’re concerned about our community and our kids,” Freeman said.

Fellow protester Sue Christian added, “We’ve seen too many people try to get free of pot.”

Freeman stressed that she was not against medical marijuana use, but rather, stores that might increase the risk of a child obtaining marijuana.

Their protest ended just after the noon hour. At 7:00 p.m., the City Council meeting began.

City Council:

Tuesday’s City Council meeting once again filled the council chambers. With all Councilors present many of the same faces were in the crowd, the same comments and views were reiterated from both sides of the marijuana dispensary issue from Council members as well as citizens.

Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff gave a PowerPoint presentation to support his agreement with law enforcement that dispensaries in Baker City are a bad idea.

He cited many of the negative effects that have occurred in Colorado including one man jumping to his death after consuming an extremely high dose of marijuana in an edible and California having more dispensaries on a stretch of Ventura Boulevard than Starbucks “which in and of itself is crazy,” he said.

Shirtcliff also showed statistics of the sharp increase in the number of medical marijuana users in recent years raising the question as to the validity of necessity or simply criminology.

He also made note of the fact that as soon as the dispensary in La Grande opened, it was robbed since a dispensary can’t use traditional options for business. Not only is marijuana stored in the dispensary but large amounts of cash as well making it a prime target for increased crime.

Councilor Langrell asked Shirtcliff, “The forum that we are looking at right now is the passing of a business license, that is I feel, a poor idea in the community. Can we just pass a law or ordinance or whatever that just says no businesses can open that aren’t allowed under federal law and stay away from the business license?”

Shirtcliff said he was unclear as to the absolute correct answer to that saying he did not see why not but deferred the question to Smith.

Smith said, “In answer to Councilor Langrell, I can’t think of any problem doing it that way but I think that when some cities decided to handle this issue through a city business license ordinance they did so because they wanted the ordinance to be as if they were doing something that applied to all business. I don’t think there has to be a fee but having city staff keep the registry of businesses and a website updated that would require staff time so it’s something to consider.”

Councilor Langrell remained adamant about wanting to stay away from a business license “It’s dangerous territory. I think there are enough



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff addressed City Council on Tuesday.

stumbling blocks put in the way of businesses in Baker County. We say no fees but know that anything that is put in place as Mr. Smith said, maybe a year down the road the City will decide it takes a lot of staff time so we are going to impose a nominal fee to cover administration of this. A business license is not going to guarantee we are going to keep dispensaries out so we may be putting a stumbling block in the way of business here in Baker City and not even accomplishing what it is we wanted to do. I really think passing something that says a business needs to be in compliance with local, state and federal law is the way to go. Mr. Smith said we can do the same thing with just an ordinance.”

City Manager Mike Kee, at the direction of Council had a draft that was provided by email to each councilor prior to the meeting, of a new city business license prepared for discussion and review by the Council.

“Mr. Smith has taken this and added things like enforcement and penalties. We both agree that it will be much better for business owners if there were not a fee and was very simple to apply for. We can set it up with a PDF on the City’s website,” Kee said to Council.

Smith stated, “I added information in reference to fees and penalties. I’m confident with the language that is in front of you with respect to penalties if a business was to attempt to operate in Baker City without a license that you could obtain a court order prohibiting them from continuing business and actually have that order enforced by law enforcement.”

Mayor Mosier advised, “I did speak with a downtown business owner that had similar concerns to Councilor Langrell’s. If we put something in place that is called a license even if there is no fee, there may be in the future and of course we don’t know what future councils are going to do.

“The business owner I was speaking with today suggested this particular ordinance be called a registration rather than a license. We have referred to that tonight because that is essentially what it is. With no fee, it’s just asking

businesses to register and give a certain amount of specific information like number of employees, type of business. It was her idea to call it a registration not a license because if you call it a license it means there is a fee. Even if there is not one now, there could be in future.

“I don’t see a problem with calling it a registration. Is there any discussion among council about re-phrasing of the ordinance and calling it a registration? Taking out any language about any fee even setting it at zero I think we’d be better off having something in place and just not even refer to a fee. I don’t know if that addresses Langrell’s concerns. At any rate, I’d like to see us put something into place tonight.”

Merrill asked directly of Kee, “Business licenses seem to be a commonality across the state of Oregon, this business license wouldn’t be unique to Baker City?”

To which Kee responded, “No in my experience, this would not be unique to Baker City. More cities have them than don’t have them.”

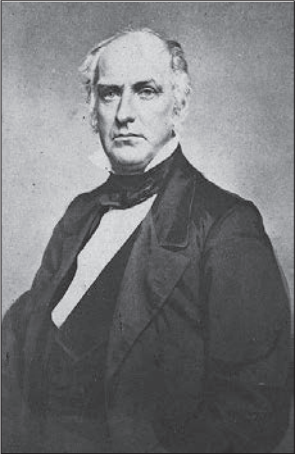
Smith agreed saying that he has “looked at a lot and they are all very different.”

Councilor Abell in response to the registration proposal and having more information on file with the Chamber of Commerce posed a question to Kee asking if having that information might be helpful when applying for grants to which Kee responded that yes it could be helpful.

Councilor Downing expressed his favor of a registration versus an actual license citing from a law enforcement standpoint he could see the value of having current contact information on file for each business in case of an emergency.

Langrell said he really saw no difference between a license or a registration “Even the DMV makes me pay for both,” he said. More discussion was made about land use and development code in which timeline was discussed and it was decided that City Manager Kee would notify the Department of Land Conservation and Development that we are intending to begin holding the required public hearings to change existing land usage.

Councilor Merrill expressed his desire have a



Historic Photo.

Mayor Mosier mentioned that Edward Dickison Baker Day was on the same day as the City Council meeting. In his political career, Baker served in the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois and later as a U.S. Senator from Oregon. A long-time close and personal friend of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, Baker served as a U.S. Army colonel during both the Mexican-American War and the American Civil War. Baker was killed in the Battle of Ball’s Bluff while leading a Union Army regiment, becoming the only sitting senator to be killed in the Civil War. Baker is the namesake for Baker City and Baker County.

reading of the ordinance so council can begin movement on this issue.

Kee read the proposed ordinance making a few changes as he went but leaving it as a business license and not changing the wording to a registration as that would have required a complete rewrite of the ordinance which the council found unfavorable time wise.

When he was finished Councilor Merrill motioned to approve the first reading with a second by Downing.

When put to a vote it was split with Mayor Mosier, Councilors Merrill, Downing, Abell and Augenfeld in favor and Councilors Langrell and Thomas opposed. The motion passed 5:2.

Before adjourning the meeting, Mosier made a point to acknowledge that February 24 was officially Edward Dickison Baker Day.

Baker City was named for Edward Baker, who was the only sitting legislator killed in the Civil War. (See photo above.)

Sheriff resigns

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Below is the text of his resignation letter:

“On February 25, 2015 I submitted my resignation to the Baker County Commissioners effective April 30, 2015. I began my career in 1971 when I became a Reserve Police Officer with the Pendleton Police Department. One year later I was sworn in with the Oregon State Police where I was employed until 2000. After that I worked as an International Police Officer in Kosovo for two years and when I returned I ran for Sheriff in 2004 and became Sheriff in January 2005.

“I have had a long career and have enjoyed all of it but I am especially proud of my time as the Baker County Sheriff. However after 44 years in Law Enforcement my wife and I have decided that it is time to retire and pursue other interests.

“Due to the fact there is less than two years in my current term the Baker County Commissioners will have to appoint someone to finish my term. Being the Sheriff is a very responsible and important position to hold. The Sheriff must be available to the citizens who they work for while also being financially accountable as well

“I want the Commissioners as well as the citizens to know that I am supporting Lieutenant Travis Ash to be the next Baker County Sheriff. Lieutenant Ash has been a valued employee of the Sheriff’s Office since 2005 with several years experience before that time. He is an exceptional police officer and effective leader and will continue to lead the Sheriff’s Office in a positive direction.

Local teen found

Last week, 16-year-old Logan Handy of Baker City was reported as an endangered runaway. On Sunday morning, he was found safe in Kansas.

Handy had gone missing last Wednesday on February 18, and was last seen by his father, Justin Handy, at 6:40 a.m. before school. He didn’t go to school, but instead traveled on his black mountain bike toward the Ebell Creek / Sutton Creek area where he abandoned his bike near the railroad tracks. He then apparently hitchhiked.

The Sheriff’s Department launched a day-long search of the area the following day after finding the bike. Handy’s parents, friends, and even some complete strangers joined in various search efforts either by vehicle, on foot or via the internet. Several citizens offered up money to help bring him home, and others began prayer chains.

Handy’s mother, Michelle Knadle, eventually made contact with the teen through an undisclosed web site, prompting him to call her from a pay phone. Family then traveled to Kansas and brought him home.

Man arrested with 7 lbs. of pot

On February 25, 2015 at about 7:20 a.m., Baker City Police Officers served a Marijuana related search warrant at 1791 Valley Avenue, apartment #1 in Baker City. Once inside, Baker City Officers seized approximately seven pounds of marijuana, along with miscellaneous paraphernalia and items typically used to process and distribute marijuana.

The renter of that apartment, 53 year-old Bobby Dude Larkin (05/13/61), was interviewed at the Baker City Police Department and subsequently taken into custody on charges of:

1. Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance (Marijuana)
2. Unlawful Manufacture of a Controlled Substance (Marijuana)
3. Unlawful Delivery of a Controlled Substance (Marijuana)

Larkin is not a registered Medical Marijuana card holder; however he stated during the interview that the Marijuana was obtained as surplus from a licensed Medical Marijuana Growing Operation.

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!

