

Local

Snake River Economic Alliance meets in Ontario

By Eileen Driver

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The Snake River Economic Development Alliance (SREDA), whose mission is to bring economic development and prosperity to the region, hosted the 2015 Western Treasure Valley Economic Breakfast at the Clarion Inn in Ontario, Oregon on Friday, February 27 at 7:00 a.m.

The breakfast topic was "What makes a Successful Downtown Revitalization Effort?" and was attended by approximately 100 business owners, elected officials and non-profit members from Malheur and Baker Counties in Oregon and Payette and Washington Counties in Idaho.

A breakfast of biscuits and gravy, scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, orange juice, tea and coffee was served buffet style to all attendees.

The meeting was opened by SREDA Chair Patrick Nauman, owner of Weiser Classic Candy, with a welcome for all in attendance as well as the Pledge of Allegiance. SREDA Vice-Chair Logan Hamilton, owner of several small grocery stores in Eastern Oregon, introduced the speakers and reminded everyone that, "Economic development starts in this room, with all of you."

First to speak was Tom Hemenway, VP of Columbia Bank, who gave us an agriculture and banking update. Hemenway said, "Do business with businesses who do business with you. We should shop little and local." He reported that the onion market is way down and contracts are scarce, sugar beets and potatoes are holding their own, and the cattle market is strong with demand staying steady. In the banking industry loan rates will be going up and banks will



Eileen Driver / The Baker County Press

Representatives from Baker County regularly attend SREDA meetings to learn about Malheur and Baker County Economic Development efforts.

continue to change and consolidate through more and more mergers.

Jerry Miller, economic development specialist and Idaho Main Street Program Coordinator informed us of the "Show me the Money" newsletter with listings of grant opportunities published by the Idaho department of commerce, about the upcoming NW Community Development Institute being held at the Riverside Hotel in Boise, Idaho from June 15-19, which is a week-long intensive course in community development with a program certificate available after the third year of study and the new addition to the Main street program for small rural communities who have a hard time qualifying for the regular program called the Downtown Improvement Network.

Sherri Stuart, Oregon Main Street State Coordinator and keynote speaker for the event, with 25 years of experience in economic development and the Main

Street programs in both Oregon and Washington, told us of the importance of revitalizing our downtowns. "People are disenchanted with malls and retail is returning to downtown," Stuart said. "But the 9 to 5 shopping hours are obsolete due to the two-earner household, the only people who can shop 9 to 5 are the unemployed." The reasons why Main Street is important are the following:

1. It's the employment center,
 2. civic center,
 3. tax base,
 4. historic area,
 5. shopping and service center,
 6. promotes public and private investment,
 7. large tourism draw,
 8. provides city with sense of community and place, and
 9. is the "original green."
- The message that came across loud and clear was that smart cities are those that value and promote their downtowns.

The 2014 Oregon Main

Street Annual report, given out at this event, reported that Historic Baker City (HBC) went thru several organizational changes in 2014 and launched a new membership drive.

HBC worked on enhancing existing events and adding new ones to promote and highlight all that downtown has to offer.

Some of the highlights were the HBC Holiday Parlor Tour, the Taste of Baker City and Halloween activities. It also states that physical improvements continue with new banners and facade improvements. Sponsors for the 2015 Western Treasure Valley Economic Breakfast included Weiser Classic Candy, Snake River Economic Development Alliance, Ontario Area Chamber of Commerce, Country Kitchen restaurant, The Argus Observer, Saint Alphonsus Medical Center, Farmer's Mutual Telephone Company, Clarion Inn and Idaho Power.

Witty

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A third candidate for the superintendent position, Orofino, Idaho superintendent Robert Vian, withdrew his name before the board meeting on Thursday.

Witty leaves his job of five years as superintendent in the drastically shrinking Grant County School District. He also served as principal for Grant Union High School for 12 years. He plans to take over the top-spot for Baker School District near the end of June, said Board Chair Andrew Bryan.

Walt Wegener, current superintendent for the Baker School District, will be asked to finish out the remainder of his contract concentrating on legislative issues and as an advisor.

Palmer will step in March 9 as interim superintendent until Witty becomes available in late June.

Knight Resigns.

Also during Tuesday's meeting, school board director Kyle Knight tendered his resignation from the board.

Knight wrote, "I will be relocating out of the area to focus on school and military service. I feel that it is in the best interest of both myself and the District if I step down early from the board. I will relinquish all of my responsibilities and privileges as a board member effective March 31, 2015. I apologize for any inconvenience that my resignation may cause to the school board, and will make all efforts to help decrease any such inconvenience. I have greatly enjoyed the experience of serving on the school board during my term and am thankful to the community for the opportunity. I am honored to have worked with such fine people in the capacity of improving the school and its functions for the students of the District."

Salary Recap

Outgoing Superintendent
Walt Wegener
\$113,209

Incoming Superintendent
Mark Witty
\$124,500

Curriculum Director,
Anthony Johnson
\$98,065

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction,
Betty Palmer
—Salary has not been set

Congratulations!



David McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Congratulations to **Debbie Swinyer** of Baker City! Debbie was the winner of our February Beef Month Celebration random drawing. New and renewing subscribers were automatically entered into a drawing for a package of tender, Baker County-grown sirloin steak, raised on the family ranch.

Man arrested for animal abuse

Chad Tyler Vaughan, born 6/11/1995, of 2630 Resort Street in Baker City, was arrested Tuesday night at his home for Aggravated

Animal Abuse.

Vaughan is accused of torturing a cat and recording the act with his phone.

Small flue fire put out quickly

A small flue fire at residence on C and 5th Streets in Baker City, was put out quickly on Wednesday morning, according to

responders.

Two engines were called to the scene. No injuries were reported.

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