

Local

Interim Sheriff

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Harvey asked the candidates the questions, which were:

• “In your view, what is the role of the Baker County Sheriff?”

• “How has your career and education prepared you to be the Baker County Sheriff? (Particular focus should be on budgeting, supervision, employment, training of personnel, interaction with law enforcement, city and county agencies, and community groups).”

• “In your opinion, address three challenges facing the Baker County Sheriff’s Office and how you, as Sheriff, would respond to them.”

• “In the event that Congress does not pass the Secure Rural Schools funding package, a county wide general fund budget reduction may have to occur. How would you reduce the Sheriff/Jail budget by up to 10%?”

• “The Sheriff, as an elected official, must work closely with the Board of Commissioners. Please provide a detailed description of how you would ensure that the people are best served by working as a team with the Board of Commissioners.”

• “The second amendment of our constitution is one of our basic rights to protect our way of life. If our state or federal government attempts to impose gun registration or confiscation on local gun owners, what stance would you take as the Sheriff? Would you support this or oppose it?”

• “If elected Sheriff, would you make changes to the structure of the department and if so, what is your philosophy on filling vacancies?”

• “Why should you be appointed as the Baker County Sheriff?”

Both candidates reiterated the answers they had previously submitted in writing to those questions.

Ash said, “It’s simple. I’ve dedicated myself to public service for almost 20 years and I am deeply invested in Baker County and the Baker County Sheriff’s Office. As the Sergeant and now Lieutenant in charge of the patrol division at the Sheriff’s Office, I have strived to focus our efforts on keeping Baker County a safe, peaceful community and as a team we pride ourselves on working hard for victims of crime and others who need help. I plan to keep building positive relationships with community members and we will always work to improve the level of service we provide to the public.

“As for me, I graduated from Pine Eagle High School in Halfway in 1993 and was hired as a full-time police officer in 1998 at the age of 22. My wife and I chose to return to Baker County to raise our two children in this wonderful community. Sheriff Southwick hired me as a patrol deputy in 2005 and I have continued to grow as a police officer and have risen through the ranks to reach the level of Lieutenant. Over the course of my career I have had a wide range of training and experiences, particularly in the areas of investigations, high risk situations, drugs and alcohol, and leadership. For the last 7 years, I have been responsible for the operations of the patrol and investigative division of the Baker County Sheriff’s Office, but I also am familiar with the management of the office as a whole. I have been humbled by all of the support I have received since Sheriff Southwick announced his retirement. If selected, I look forward to working for Baker County.”

Hoopes said, “I should be appointed Baker County Sheriff because I have the knowledge and drive to be successful. My employment history speaks for itself—I am a hard worker, and I have been all my life. I have been taught a strong work ethic by my grandfather, father and extended family. I have the best interests in mind for the public, as well as the employees. The fact we are at this crossroad in the Sheriff’s appointment process proves I am willing to stand up and fight for the opportunity to serve and represent the citizens of Baker County. I truly care about this place we call ‘home,’ and the people who live, work and visit here.

“I am well aware if I am appointed to this position, and I fail to work hard enough to earn the vote of the people in the 2016 election, I will be unemployed. Therefore, I am highly motivated and determined to succeed as Sheriff of Baker County. “It is my hope that you will strongly consider appointing me, John Hoopes, to the position of Baker County Sheriff.”

A little over an hour into the session, after the candidates answered the questions prepared by the Commissioners, a break was taken, while written questions were submitted to Martin from the public. She read these to each of the candidates as the process continued.

• “Do you consider the Sheriff the highest law authority in the county, over

and above any federal law authority?”

Ash responded, “The difference I see there, is the Sheriff is going to be enforcing state laws, and federal laws are not enforced by the Sheriff’s Office, and so, we are given the chief executive authority (by statute) over the State laws in the County. We are not going to be enforcing any federal regulations. That’s not something we can do.”

Hoopes responded, “I’ve got to agree with Travis on most parts, that the Sheriff is responsible for the State’s laws, and that I do believe the Sheriff is the presiding authority in each county they’re in, in Oregon. It’s a pretty simple thing, to me.”

• “Do you feel public opinion is valued in selecting a Sheriff, and if so, what did you do to ensure the public voice was heard in the appointment process?”

Neither candidate gave a response as Harvey interceded and said that the candidates had no say in the matter since the County Board of Commissioners set up the process, including the method of public involvement.

• “What is your strategy for working more effectively with the media, and how will you ensure that the media and the public receive the information they need in a timely manner?”

Both candidates responded that it’s important to get information out to the public, and to work with the media, but there has to be a balance, because some information can’t be released, because it would endanger an investigation, for example.

• “Do you believe it is important or necessary to interpret the U.S. Constitution in order to decide which laws you will uphold and enforce?”

Ash responded, “State statutes are derived from the (U.S.) Constitution, and the Oregon Constitution. When it comes to state statutes, and what we’re actually enforcing, there’s not a whole lot of interpreting we can do. We’re bound by case law, and we’re bound by what the actual law is, and so, there’s not a whole lot of room for interpretation on our part.”

Hoopes responded, “I agree with Travis, in part, for sure. I don’t think we need to interpret the Constitution. For the most part, the Constitution is fairly black and white. Regulation comes from that, and case law is produced from it. We are required to uphold the Constitution for what it is.”

Other questions along similar themes were:

• “What authority interprets the law? Is the law interpreted by the Supreme Court, or by the local authority?”

• “If elected Sheriff, and realizing that you are the ultimate law enforcement authority in Baker County, what actions will you take in regards to enforcing the laws inside Baker County, enacted by outside agencies, such as the Forest Service and BLM?”

• “Should the Sheriff be notified each time a federal law enforcement officer goes upon a valid, locatable mining claim, under ORS 105.005, and the 1872 mining laws?”

• “Have you ever been the Incident Commander or the Lead Officer? If so, describe your experience dealing with a hostage situation, SWAT, Search and Rescue, and also describe your experience writing major search warrants, and serving as a Peace Officer in a major investigation?”

• “How do you feel about the militarization of local police forces?”

After these questions were answered, Harvey addressed the public, and asked if there were more questions to pose to the candidates.

Ed Hardt, Jim Iler, Jim Scott, Ron Edge, Art Sappington, Gary Dielman, Chuck Chase, and Ken Anderson participated in this segment of the interview process.

The participants asked the candidates about several issues, like militarization, federal jurisdictional authority, and enforcing laws on mining claims.

Hardt said local law enforcement and the Commissioners needed to learn more about federal jurisdiction and laws concerning mining claims, and handed them copies of documents he compiled.

Some questions took the form of strong comments, and at one point, two people, including Dielman, left the room, seemingly frustrated.

Chase thanked the Commissioners and the candidates for what he considered an open, fair interview process.

Bennett posed some questions to the candidates, and after that, all three Commissioners thanked them for serving and for participating in the interview process, along with the public.

Closing statements from the candidates were given at that point. A decision about the appointment of Sheriff is expected to be made at the next regular Commission session, on Wednesday, March 18, at 9 a.m.

Firefighters climb steps for charity



Submitted Photo.

This year, Baker City Fire Department fielded a team of three to compete in an international event—the Climb. Local competitors were Baker City firefighters Mike Downing (pictured above) and Ben Decker, and Brandon Hargous from Bend who climbed for the Baker City team. The team raised \$2,445 in the fight to prevent leukemia/lymphoma and, as Downing pointed out, the opportunity to donate is open until the end of March. The Climb in Seattle is a one-day event, for which 1900 firefighters from across the USA and several countries around the world signed up. 1,711 climbed the Columbia Tower, which worked out to a firefighter being sent up ever 16 seconds. Every climber wears full firefighting gear, which weighs 60 lbs. The times for the Baker City team were Downing, 3rd year, 55:12 Decker, 3rd year, 28:31 Hargous, 1st year, 20:09. As time of print, the totals for the fundraiser were not yet available. So far this year, more than two million dollars have been raised for the cause by this event. The fastest climber for 2015 was the same as the previous three years: Andrew Drobek of Missoula City Fire, with a time of 10:46. That means Drobek averages seven storeys each minute. The oldest climber was 73, and had a time of 20:00.

Free vision screenings offered

Baker County Library District and partner organizations See to Read, Elks and Lions Clubs of Oregon have their sights set on improving the eyesight and success of Baker County kids.

Free vision screenings for children ages 3-7 will be offered on Tuesday, March 17, 2015 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at the library in Baker City. No pre-registration is necessary.

At least 15 percent of all preschoolers have an undetected vision problem that needs to be treated with glasses. Unknown vision impairments have unnecessary negative effects on development as a child learns to read and write in school.

The screening technology used at all See to Read events is photo screening, which just takes a picture of the child’s pupils and processes the information automatically. Because of efficiency, children as young as 3 years old are encouraged to have a vision screening. Early detection increases the chance for successful treatment.

Siewell nominated for teaching award

LA GRANDE, Ore. (EOU) – First-year honor students at Eastern Oregon University nominated 19 educators from Oregon and Washington to receive Inspirational Teacher Awards this year.

Students who maintained dean’s list standing during fall term were given the opportunity to nominate a teacher who influenced them on their road to higher education and academic excellence.

Brian Staebler-Siewell, 2014 graduate of Baker High School, nominated mathematics teacher Michael Siewell.

Two more arrested on meth charges

On March 7, 2015 at about 8:50 am, Baker City Police Officers served an arrest warrant on Valerie Jean Taylor while she was at the Baker County Sheriff’s Office visiting an inmate. On March 8, at about 10:03 a.m., Baker City Officers served an arrest warrant on Ashley Denice Cleland at the Baker County Sheriff’s Office where she turned herself in to officers. By means of Grand Jury Indictments, both women were charged with: -Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance (Methamphetamine), Unlawful Delivery of a Controlled Substance (Methamphetamine), Tampering with Evidence Taylor and Cleland had both been living with Jose Padilla-Albrido at 3025 D Street in Baker City.

Both women were also at 3025 D Street when Baker City Officers executed the second search warrant at the residence on February 18, 2015. It was during that warrant that officers seized approximately one pound of Methamphetamine and \$3,500 in cash.

This investigation will be ongoing and additional arrests are likely.

2015 East Shriners All-Star Queen named

Cymbrie (Cymie) Lagao has been named the 2015 East Shriners All-Star Queen. She is 14.5 years old and attends the 8th grade at RPA (Redmond Proficiency Academy).

After a fall from a haystack, Lagao nearly severed four fingers. After surgery, she said, “I then started my rehab at Shriners Hospital. During my rehab they were so great and wonderful. Two years

later I have only have 60 percent usage of my hand. I am not able to make a fist yet, however will be going in to surgery this summer/fall to fix it.

She added, “I love the Shriners and all they do for kids like me and others. I have always been around the Shriners and this game.”

The game will be held this summer in Baker City.



Submitted Photo.

Cymbrie (Cymie) Lagao, 14, is this year’s East side Queen for the East-West Shrine Game.