

# Local

## City completes the year's budget process



Gina K. Swartz/The Baker County Press

Members of City Council, the Budget Committee and key staff members (not all captured in these photos) tackled the arduous task of discussion and finally the approval of the annual budget during a series of meetings last week.

### • YMCA / SAM-O REQUEST FUNDS, BCPD BULLET-PROOF VESTS NEED REPLACED

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For three consecutive evenings last week the City Budget Board met to review, discuss, make changes to and eventually approve the proposed 2015-2016 budget.

The Budget Board is made up of seven community members who work intensively with City Council members and City staff to approve a budget that meets the goals of the City and expectations of the community.

Current Budget Board members are Randy Daugherty, Gail Duman, Aletha Bonebrake, Beverly Calder, Rustin Smith, Dan McQuisten and Bruce Nichols.

Tuesday, May 19, as the meetings were getting started, Daugherty was elected Chairman with Beverly Calder vice-chair.

City Manager Mike Kee addressed the Budget Board, giving a brief overview of the proposed budget put together by staff beginning in March and based off of numbers gathered at that time.

He also reminded everyone that grant dollars or donation money already received for certain projects has been accounted for in the budget and earmarked. If that money is not used for its intention, it must be returned and therefore taken out of the budget.

He noted that labor costs had risen, including insurance costs by about 17%, advising that board members should expect to see that reflected in the budget. He also noted that at the end of last year, there was a carry-forward balance of about \$500,000.

Kee also drew attention to the request in the Police Department budget for a request to fund an additional officer who will serve as a School Resource Officer, which is a joint venture with the School District.

The School District will provide funding for the position also and grant dollars are included as well.

Several community members who have interest in budgeted money from

the City gave brief presentations to the board for consideration of what they were proposing.

First to speak was Heidi Dalton, CEO of Baker County YMCA.

Dalton said, "I am here to thank the City for allowing the Y to run the pool on behalf of the citizens of Baker. I think we do a great job of partnering and sharing the costs of operating the pool. I'm here asking that you really stand behind this and make an investment in a very valuable community asset to ensure that it is open for years to come."

With about 25,000 visits per year, the pool built in 1983 is seeing some big systems that are in need of repairs.

Dalton would like to see the City be proactive in those repairs rather than reactive causing a shutdown of the pool to preform repairs.

"We are teaching over a thousand kids to swim this year. We are reaching every 2nd and 3rd grader in Baker County and then some. We are very proud of that but we simply can't do that without the swimming pool being open," she said.

Repairs needed include reroofing areas that are currently leaking, fixing shower heads that are not working properly and replacement of and aging boiler heating system in the facility.

"Is the boiler original to the building?" asked Councilor Merrill.

"That is my understanding, yes," answered Dalton. She also indicated some money that could have been used toward helping to replace the boiler system had recently been redirected by the YMCA board to be used instead toward YMCA programs such as learning to swim programs. The YMCA is able to offer lessons that typically cost around \$40 for about \$6.

"We just can't see putting money into an asset that is not ours when it could be used elsewhere to further our own programs," explained Dalton.

Richard Haines, President of New Hope for Eastern Oregon Animals addressed council asking for \$2,000 to use toward fundraising. The group indicated they would be approaching the County as well for funds. The goal of New Hope is to eventually build a shelter in Baker

City. Also addressing the Board was Merlin Gath from the golf board. He spoke of money requested for a bathroom remodel two years ago.

Major problems with the irrigation system on the golf course required a portion of that money be taken away from the bathroom remodel project, however a successful overhaul was done with the remainder of the money.

Irrigation problems continue to plague the Golf Course and more money to address issues there is being requested.

The entire proposed budget was gone through line by line with discussion being made on some items.

The Police Department asked for funding for new bulletproof vests that are expiring.

Budget Board member Duman asked, "How do those things expire?"

Chief Wyn Lohner explained equipment deteriorates under working conditions and in different climates.

Board Member Nichols stated he "did not see a budget for unemployment, was no one expected to leave?"

Lohner replied, "Not expecting that to happen, and at least not with anyone that would be eligible for benefits."

Fire Department Chief Mark Johns indicated they had found some savings.

He was asking for a position to be restored and replacement of some personal equipment for the firefighters such as radios. It was also noted that emergency services had found some additional savings as well and would be requesting less for dispatch services.

As the Board went through the budget, discussion was made again of the boiler replacement for Sam-O-Swim center.

Daugherty felt a task force to look into the best course of action in regards to the boiler was the best option.

He felt that the task force should include Heidi Dalton of the YMCA, Doug Schwin, City Engineer, Ben Merrill City Councilman among others preferably pool users.

Daugherty indicated that this particular item should go before the City Council in a regular meeting.

Kee said he would add it to the agenda for the next

upcoming meeting.

Another item discussed was the golf course in which Bill Tiedeman, who currently leases the golf course wanted the City to buy back equipment he had purchased specifically a golf cart, golf cart house and a Point of Sale (POS) machine.

The budget board discussed the need for such items and it was agreed that the POS machine would have valuable information for a successor should Tiedeman not choose to continue on at the end of his contract.

The board also felt that the Golf Course's requested budget amount to replace irrigation at the course was too vast and needed to be scaled down, maybe replacing only smaller portions at a time.

The Board also discussed the water fund, street fund, public works fund, replacement of the roof on the mausoleum at the cemetery, the court plaza project, airport fund and equipment and vehicle funds among other smaller items.

At the end of the third meeting the Board voted to approve the proposed budget with some changes they had discussed to such things as the Golf Course budget and earmarking and placing in the Police Department budget the \$2,000 asked for by New Hope for future construction costs of the actual shelter facility not fund raising projects.

The Board also discussed whether some smaller items like adding a tree well at City Hall were simple items that could just be approved on an as needed basis by City Manager Kee and not included in the budget specifically. Kee was tasked with being fiscally responsible for such projects.

Due to a decrease in the budget for the Arts Commission Randy Daugherty pledged to donate \$500 with a match by Mayor Mosier.

Budget Board vice chair Beverly Calder also pledged to donate \$365 for bags at a doggie station. Kee advised the board that a general fund vote needed to be done separate from a consolidated dispatch budget vote because Councilor Downing had a conflict.

"What we've done in the past is vote on the General Fund Admin Department with Councilor Downing abstaining. Then as

one group, we vote on the entire budget with his vote included and he doesn't have any influence on that admin fund at that point because we've already voted on it. This year that total is \$1,117,636. No changes were made to the proposed budget it is as proposed and includes transfers, contingencies and unappropriated funds. Also included are personnel services, materials and services and capital outlay," said Dexter.

Downing did abstain, stating, "Because I work at 911 and receive a paycheck I cannot vote on this."

The remaining board voted unanimously to approve this portion of the budget.

The budget board as a whole unanimously voted to approve the 2015-2016 Budget in the amount of

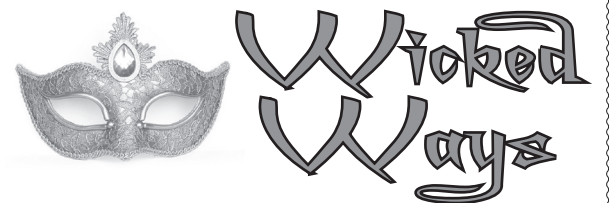
\$19,277,419.

Daugherty then called for a motion to approve the City property tax rate of \$6.3314 for every thousand assessed, that motion passed unanimously as well.

Daugherty stated that his term would be expiring this year and he intended to not seek reappointment. "I think 12 years is enough and it will probably get kinder and gentler around here without me around," he said with a laugh.

The approved budget will go to the City Council where it will be adopted at a Council meeting before the deadline of June 30.

Both the originally proposed budget and the approved budget, as well as links to previous year's budgets, are available online at [bakercity.com](http://bakercity.com).



### MASQUERADE BALL HALLOWEEN 2015

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE BAKER COUNTY PRESS AND THE GEISER GRAND HOTEL IN BAKER CITY!

Some of the add-ons available for purchase at the event:

- Professional portrait photography.
- Paranormal author book signings.
- Celebrity appearances.
- Horse-drawn carriage rides.
- A limited, themed meal menu.
- A specialty bar with a variety of gothic possibilities—a Death Fairy cocktail anyone?

Go to [www.thebakercountypress.com](http://www.thebakercountypress.com) to see more details on what we have confirmed for the evening and what's in the works!

Inspired by Anne Rice's famous Halloween Ball in New Orleans, this night is all about the costumes & the atmosphere!

When: Halloween Night 2015, beginning at 7:30 p.m., ending 11:30 p.m.

Where: The Geiser Grand Hotel on Main Street in Baker City, Oregon

Ticket Price: \$20 per adult, ages 21 and over only, for event entry including access to "haunted" areas, a live DJ with music, dancing, mist and gothic lighting. Add-ons available at venue!

Go to the front desk of The Geiser Grand or online to [www.theBakerCountyPress.com](http://www.theBakerCountyPress.com) to buy your tickets now! We don't anticipate any sales at the door & expect tickets to sell out well in advance of the event. Don't wait!