

# Local

## County: tax appeals and chip seals

• COMMISSIONERS HEAR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, DEPARTMENT REPORTS

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On Wednesday, the Baker County Board of Commissioners held a regular, bi-monthly session in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, at 9 a.m.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioner Mark Bennett, Commissioner Tim Kerns, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

Attendees included Baker County Treasurer Alice Durlinger, Baker County Road Master Jeff Smith, Baker County Weed Master Artie Grammon, Jefferson Mining District Coordinating Officer Art Sappington, Ed Hardt, Ken Anderson, Bobbie Danser, and Wanda and Tork Ballard.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation, Bennett mentioned some possible agenda changes, including inviting Attorney Dan Van Thiel and Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirlcliff to speak at a future regular session regarding Public Meeting Law notices.

The agenda was adopted with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

### Citizen Participation.

For citizen participation, Sappington provided the Board with copies of a Memorandum of Law document compiled by the Jefferson Mining District, a United States Department of the Interior, Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) document, a document titled “Federal Land Managers Intimidation, Bullying Threaten Citizens Rights, a Hostile Environment,” a suction dredge Motion for Summary Adjudication on Federal Preemption document, and a letter, dated October 20, 2014, addressed from Sappington to U.S. Forest Service Region 6 Forester Jim Peña.

He said that the Jefferson Mining District has not yet received a response to the October letter addressed to Peña, which points out issues with road closures and improper management.

In it, Sappington says, “For the record, I, in the lawful capacity of Jefferson Mining District Coordinator, hereby give notice for you to cease and desist all unlawful actions under color of lawful management; and instead bring your actions consistent with the lawful procedures and laws and to avoid embarrassing and expensive legal action to counter any misconduct on your part in a private capacity, or public in that of the Secretary. To avoid any mistake, the intent of Congress is clear. As a matter of law, your duty is first to put the forest reserves into productive uses, such as improving



At left, Alice Durlinger, Treasurer, gives the Commissioners a departmental update including tax issues.

harvest of timber, limiting the forest to depredation by fire, grazing, improving access, improving flows of waters, and fostering and encouraging all lawful uses, such as development, extraction and disposal of the mineral estate. Any conduct short of these or any other required by Congress will be met with resort to all lawful remedies available to Jefferson Mining District.”

Sappington’s question, “Who is the Forest Service’s designated coordinator that I am to work with after the first of the year for this (Blue Mountain Land Use Plan and the Resource Management Plan) and the Baker City Watershed?” asked in that same letter has yet to be answered, Sappington said.

Sappington discussed the topic of Federal Preemption, and Hardt asked Sappington to clarify the term, because not everyone understood it. Sappington responded by explaining the term, which is defined as the invalidation of a state or lower law, that conflicts with federal law. Sappington said that the Memorandum of Law document he provided the Board covers the topic, and that other states, including Oregon, shall recognize legislative acts, public records, and judicial decisions of the other states within the U.S., resolving any perceived issue.

### Tax Department.

Durlinger gave the Board a departmental update, providing the Board documents with details regarding County main accounts, payroll accounts, accounts payable, etc.

Included in the documents was a ten-year history of foreclosures.

In 2014, according to the documents, there were 32 foreclosure properties at the beginning of the year, with 18 currently left on the list, with the County expected to acquire the deeds of in 2016.

A tax payment analysis document Durlinger provided to the Board stated that for tax year 2014, 83.8% of total taxes was collected in full, totaling \$15,142,401.29.

Several Baker County businesses are appealing their current tax situation with the Oregon Tax Mag-

istrate, including Idaho Power and Ash Grove Cement, which pay just over \$1 million and \$800 respectively.

Ash Grove’s hearing is in September and will result in a nearly \$100K refund if they prevail.

Tesoro, which owns USA Gas and Shell locally and pays the sixth largest amount of taxes in the County, is also appealing nearly all of their \$143K bill.

The next step, should these companies be unhappy with the hearing, would be to appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court.

A list of Baker County’s top 15 taxpayers is also available from the Baker County Treasurer’s Office. Among those are Union Pacific, Northwest Pipeline, Pine Telephone Inc., Century Link and Marvin Wood Products.

### ODOT Building.

A scheduled Oregon State University (OSU) Extension departmental update, with Bob Parker, was previously canceled, so the Board discussed the next item of business, the possible purchase of the old Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) building.

Harvey explained the options, including purchase and renovation, at around \$250,000 total. He said the County already has spent \$6,500 to address some current issues with the building, and is currently paying \$1,500 a month to rent the property.

The Board discussed issues with making a decision at the moment, including having to relocate Grammon, who uses the space on the property for County Weed Department purposes.

Harvey mentioned another piece of property as a possibility, which would be around \$150,000 to purchase, but the Board decided to table the discussion until the next regular Commission session, June 17, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns.

### Travel Management Committee.

Order No. 2015-123, Appointing Members To The Baker County Travel Management Committee, was approved, with a motion from Bennett,

and a second from Kerns. Allan Chase (re-appointed for another term), Wanda Ballard and Tork Ballard were appointed, their terms set to expire on February 1, 2018.

### Anthony Lakes Chip Seal.

Smith discussed with the Board a Statement of Work for Reimbursable Agreement, Anthony Lakes Highway Chip Seal—OR 1146(1).

This agreement, between the County and the Federal Highway Administration, according to the document, provides for funding of a progression of activities, and the proposed project is intended to extend the pavement life by the application of a chip seal, from approximately Milepost 12.7, at the west end of the North Powder Creek bridge, to approximately Milepost 15.1, near the intersection of Forest Road 7302.

In general, the document states, the condition of County Road 1146 is good, but this section will begin to degrade because it has reached the end of its design life. With a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns, the agreement was ratified.

### Sage-Grouse.

Bennett voiced some concerns over the Greater Sage-Grouse Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) released by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) last Friday. He said that the FEIS states that there is a 60% decline in the population of the Sage Grouse in the priority habitat area around Baker City, and he is attempting to find out via communication with the BLM and other agencies how they determined this number, and why there is, according to the document, such a decline.

He suggested that the Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) also address this major issue, because of the potential impacts of the FEIS.

Martin informed the Board that there is a work session scheduled for next Wednesday at 9 a.m., and a special City of Unity budget session at 10:30 a.m. The next regular Commission session is Wednesday, June 17, at 9 a.m.

## Newman

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A detour was eventually created for motorists travelling eastbound.

Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner first pinned a Lieutenant name tag on Newman’s uniform then addressed the crowd after Yeaton finished administering the oath.

Lohner said, “This is the future of the department. We will be moving someone into replace the Lieutenant’s Sergeant position within a few weeks. The department will take on a whole new face and I think there’s going to be some exciting things happening. We are getting our new guys back (from the academy) and they are getting geared up and ready to go. There are a lot of changes happening in Baker County Law Enforcement, within our agency, the Sheriff Department, of course with the new Sheriff, Travis Ash and Oregon State Police’s Lieutenant Belding will be taking over regional command for OSP here in our area. A lot of exciting things are happening and I see nothing but our agencies all working together for this community and for this area. Better than we’ve ever seen before and I think it’s going to be really promising for all the citizens—that is who we serve. That’s why we do this it’s for the people out there, not for us.”

After Lohner thanked everyone for coming, Lieutenant Newman’s son was heard saying “That’s it?”

And that was it.

Just like that the Baker City Police Department began its journey forward into the future.

## Preparedness fair

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Next, was the table set up by the Baker City Pharmacy. Baker City Pharmacy provided information and displayed a variety of First Aid kits. Baker County resident Harold “Mike” Webb conducted a survival class providing more information on assembling a First Aid kit and quoted advice he’d received years ago from Dr. Menzie McKim who advised that duct tape is one of the most important items to include in any emergency medical kit. Webb said that duct tape can be used for a variety of medical situations including bandages and splints.

Webb advised that building skills and practice are the most important aspects of preparing for an emergency. “The more you know the less you need,” said Webb.

The Oath Keepers organization displayed survival kits and offered ideas for those with physical limitations. The displays included survival bags assembled by several different people to offer a variety of ideas. Besides the essentials including food, water filtering systems, and cooking equipment, the Oath Keepers also suggested vacuum sealed items—and demonstrated the value to those with physical limitations of a wheeled golf bag caddy to transport several survival bags.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service representatives from Boise, Idaho distributed information on severe weather related emergencies and also conducted a Severe Weather Training Workshop class for local weather spotters. Participants were trained on cloud and storm recognition, weather reporting procedures, storm hazards, and safety tips.

More information on NOAA’s weather spotting program may be accessed at internet address: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/boi/awareness/skywarn.php>, or by contacting Jay Breidenbach, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with NOAA National Weather Service at (208) 334-9860 or email [jay.breidenbach@noaa.gov](mailto:jay.breidenbach@noaa.gov) or [jjencopal@bakercounty.org](mailto:jjencopal@bakercounty.org).

“We’re building a partnership with Baker County Emergency Management and developing relationships with people from Baker County,” Breidenbach said.

Monty and Debbie Abbott from Port Orchard, Washington, work as independent Thrive Life consultants. They demonstrated and handed out samples of freeze-dried foods. Their food products retain 100-percent of the nutrient through the freeze-drying process and all their products are GMO-free. The foods are picked and freeze-dried at maximum ripeness and thus burst with flavor.

“A conservative estimate shows that 25-percent of people’s food budget ends up in the trash. We go head-to-head on pricing with the grocery stores and our food can be stored for long periods of time so there is no waste, resulting in a huge savings on food costs,” Monty explained. “We live by the motto, store what you eat and eat what you store.”

The Abbotts said their food unopened has a 25-year shelf life and after opening can be stored for one or two years. Thrive Life products may be purchased at Costco grocery outlets or by contacting the Abbotts directly.

The Abbotts may be contacted at [debbie@morethrive.com](mailto:debbie@morethrive.com), [monty@morethrive.com](mailto:monty@morethrive.com), or by calling (360) 509-8001. More information on Thrive Life products may be found at internet address: [www.pantrytoday.com](http://www.pantrytoday.com).

Janice Nelson, food storage expert offered information on home canning and food storage. She conducts classes locally and advises that every household have at the minimum two-weeks of food storage and optimally three months or a year’s worth of food stored. She handed out samples of dehydrated fruits and vegetables.

Life Flight made a landing and take-off from the armory grounds and members of the Baker City Emergency response team participated during the day demonstrating medical emergency response capabilities.

The American Red Cross handed out Emergency Contact Cards and stressed the importance of making a plan to contact family members in case of emergency.

Mindy Sherrieb, Red Cross representative echoed the sentiment of all the presenters during the Emergency Preparedness Fair, “Assemble an emergency kit. Then, make a plan to make a plan, make that plan, then practice that plan.”

## Mining Association invites public

Please join the Eastern Oregon Mining Association at 6:30 p.m. June 5, at City Hall in Baker City, for a chance to meet Jon Matye, special agent for

the Forest Service.

Members and guests will learn about his approach to law enforcement on the Forest. Matye worked on the Wallowa-Whitman

previously and is familiar with this part of Eastern Oregon.

He has had an impressive career which includes successful arson and criminal

investigations, he has investigated organized crime drug trafficking and has been a member of a drug enforcement task force.