

# Local

## County: City of Unity budget set, letter sent to Rep. Walden

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a special commission session on Wednesday, June 24, 2015, at 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse.

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

Attendees included Doni and Craig Bruland, Alice Knapp and Gary Dielman.

Shortly after the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation were recited, the Board discussed changes to the agenda, noting a couple of additions. Bennett moved to adopt the agenda, with a second from Kerns, and the motion carried.

None of the attendees made any comments during the Citizen Participation segment of the session, and there were no minutes on the agenda to review or approve.

Bennett moved to approve Order No. 2015-127, An Order For Cancellation Of Wholly Uncollectible Personal And Real Property Taxes, with a second from Kerns, and the motion carried. The amount listed was \$4.78, associated with Richard Johnson, for 2014.

Harvey then read a letter addressed from the Board to Congressman Greg Walden, in support of House Resolution (HR) 2647, The Resilient National Forest Act of 2015.

The letter stated the following in its entirety:

*“The Baker County Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) met June 23, 2015 and voted to support HR 2647. This bill addresses the frustrations that our committee has been dealing with for the past six years on getting successful USFS timber projects on the ground. As you know, timber sales, and forest health projects very often end up in the courts, rather than providing help to forest health.*

*“We are particularly pleased that the bill specifically addresses our following concerns:*

*“1. Reduces the number of alternatives to two (action vs. no action) when a collaborative is involved.*

*“2. Increased emphasis on utilization of Categorical Exclusions provisions:*

*“A. Increased acres when done with public input through collaborative, RAC (Resource Advisory Committee) or Community Wildfire Protection Plan provisions.*

*“B. Expedite salvage operations after a wildfire.*

*“C. Address insect and/or disease infestation forest health issues.*

*“D. Timely implementation of large scale forest restoration projects after a fire.*

*“3. Tighten terms and conditions for legal challenges. As you know, this is hugely important from the example of the Snow Basin project.*

*“4. Restrict on plaintiff payments through the Equal Access to Justice Act.*

*“5. Strengthen the Secure Rural Schools provisions. This is very important to*



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Doni Bruland (at left) addresses the County Commissioners.

*the stability of our country budget, and the county economic well-being.*

*“6. Tighten road decommissioning rules and applications in fire prone areas.*

*“7. Prohibits the East side screen rule—21” dbh. This has been an ‘economic killer’ in getting productive and economically sound projects on the ground.*

*“Thank you, Congressman Walden, for your continued support for the natural resource industry in Baker County, and in particular, the forest products industry. This is a good bill.”*

The Board discussed the letter, and HR 2647, and discussed issues associated with the timber industry and forest management, and Bennett moved to approve the letter, with a second from Kerns. The motion carried.

### City of Unity.

The Board, acting as the Council of the City of Unity, discussed the City of Unity’s water and sewer rates, and the July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 budget for Unity.

Resolution No. 2015-02 was adopted, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. This adoption of this Resolution results in an annual rate increase of 3%, applied to each water and/or sewer account, effective each July 1st of the fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2015.

The Resolution also states that “All residential parcels not subject to the standard use rate, but having a sewer connection or water meter at the property line will be assessed a monthly fee of \$25.00 for availability of service. Commercial parcels will be reviewed and rates established at no less than 50% of the monthly rate.” Additionally, the hookup fee will be \$250.00 plus the cost of the meter (unless available). Payments 60 days past due will result in disconnection of service, and payment of delinquent fees, plus interest and penalties, with a reconnection fee of \$250.00 plus prepayment for water and sewer.

Resolution No. 2015-03, the 2015 to 2016 budget for the City of Unity, was adopted, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Kerns. The motion carried. The total adopted budget is in the amount of \$138,103. Appropriations include the following:

General Fund, \$25,140; Water Debt Reserve Fund, \$6,725; Sewer Debt Reserve Fund, \$17,538; EMS Fund, \$618; Street Fund, \$10,420; Water Fund, \$34,340; Sewer Fund, \$19,768; Solid Waste Fund, \$5,467; Sewer Debt Service Fund, \$12,882; and Water Debt Service Fund, \$5,205.

Agreement No. 148536, and Intergovernmental Agreement between the Oregon Department of Human Services, Baker County, and Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff, was approved, with a motion from Kerns, and a second from Bennett. This agreement addresses services and reimbursement associated with Child Welfare dependency cases.

### ODOT Buildings.

The Board discussed the County’s recent offer to purchase property at 13th and E Streets, where two disassembled old Extension Service buildings will be reassembled and located, and the offer to purchase the old Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) building. The Board is awaiting a decision from ODOT, and there is a signed earnest agreement currently for the property at 13th and E Streets, Harvey said.

### Natural Resources.

Doni Bruland, Baker County NRAC Chair, discussed with the Board the County’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Sage Grouse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Protest letter, addressed to BLM headquarters, Washington, D.C.

The letter, at that time, was in draft form, and the Board and Bruland discussed suggested changes. Bruland said that she had hoped for more public input, and that Jan Alexander and Cynthia Long of the Baker County NRAC were assisting with making revisions to the letter.

The letter was not revised and approved at the session, however, was expected to be revised, approved by the Board, and sent via email and regular mail by Friday, as Monday, June 29, is the deadline. Harvey thanked Bruland for her efforts in drafting the letter.

Martin provided the Board with copies of a letter and application forms received from Jeff Tomac, Designated Federal Official, Northeast Oregon Forests Resource Advisory

Committee (NEOFAC). In his letter, addressed to Kerns, Tomac states that nominees are being sought to serve on the 15-member committee.

He said, “The committee’s duties include recommending projects and funding to improve Forest health, watersheds, roads and facilities on or adjacent to the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. In order to reach the most potential nominees, I am seeking outreach assistance of County Commissioners served by the NEOFAC. RAC committee members will be officially appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture for a term of two years; shall not receive compensation; and must be able to commit the time necessary to carry out the committee responsibilities of several full-day meetings each year. To the extent possible, members must reside within the Baker, Crook, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Union, Wallowa, Wheeler and Grant Counties.” More information is available from Tomac, at (541)523-1301, or by email at jtomac@fs.fed.us.

### Economic Development.

A Professional Services Agreement with Baker County Economic Development Director Greg Smith, for Economic Development Services, was on the original agenda for the purposes of review, but discussion was postponed because an agreement had not been received from Smith in time for the session.

Bennett discussed Greater Sage Grouse-related issues, including predator concerns, and emphasized that Baker County has so far had poor enrollment in the Baker County Soil and Water Districts’ (SWCD) Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) program, a vital, free protection agreement between the SWCD and landowners in the County, in the event the Grouse is listed as an endangered species.

A regular, bi-monthly session is scheduled for Wednesday, July 1, 2015, at 9 a.m., and a special session is scheduled for Wednesday, July 8, 2015, at 9 a.m.

Harvey noted that the County Courthouse will be closed on Friday, July 3, 2015, in observance of Independence Day.

## GOP’s CD2

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Jones was also appointed to head up one key committee at the party’s State level—the ORP’s Natural Resources Committee.

Dyke’s new position came in a slightly different manner, through an appointment about a month ago when the position in which she was interested was uncontested. Dyke is now CD2 secretary.

Aside from political volunteerism, Jones is a member of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association who works on the family ranch in Bridgeport. Her background also includes human resources management and economic development/business startup instruction.

Dyke is known in the community for her work on the Board of Directors of the local Soroptimists. Most of her work history has been social work with mentally disabled and senior citizens, as well as teaching.

At the most grassroots level, counties are broken down into precincts, each served by PCPs who represent the registered voters within their respective precincts within that party. Baker County has 50 PCP slots for each major political party—Democrat and Republican.

In Oregon, there are seven other minor parties, and also the option to be affiliated with none of them—a NAV—nonaffiliated voter.

Going up the chain, counties are then part of a Congressional District. There are five in Oregon. The Congressional Districts make up the State parties. State parties then make up the National party.

CD2 is a geographically huge district, composed of 20 counties from all of eastern and central Oregon. This year marks the first time in decades that Baker County will have an executive presence at the district or State level.

“I’m really excited to bring Baker County’s voice to light in the ORP. If local voters think their votes didn’t make a difference, they’re wrong. We’re working hard to stand up for the things that are important to Baker County. Protecting our gun rights, for one. Protecting local control of the laws that affect our lives whenever possible,” said Jones.

Dyke said, “I am involved in politics because I want to help keep America and my family safe from socialism, which has rapidly taken a foothold in our country. What better way to do that than as a Republican at the grassroots area? I must do more than just vote. I will do everything I can to promote and defend freedom and American patriotism.”

Both Jones and Dyke, as well as other representatives from the Baker County Republicans are headed to Salem this weekend for the State meeting.

## WWNF says look out for fallen trees

Baker City, OR - Winter and spring 2015 came with several large wind events in the Seven Devils Mountains, on the Idaho side of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA), leaving many hiking trails crisscrossed with trees. There is extremely heavy downfall across the trails throughout the Seven Devils.

The Bridge Creek drainage, Boise Trail South #101, Sheep Creek and Sheep Creek Trail #53 have been heavily impacted by a wind shear event; hundreds of trees are down across the trails. They are impassable to stock and difficult for hikers.

Due to a recent landslide Bernard Creek Trail #58 is closed to the public by forest order. The trail is closed from the junction with Snake River National Recreation Trail #102 to the intersection of Dry Diggins Ridge Trail #140 near McGaffee Cow Camp.

A separate landslide led to the collapse of a retaining wall on Snake River Trail #102. The collapse is located 1/4 mile south of Pittsburgh Landing. The trail is open for hiking, but not passable by stock animals at this time. Please use caution as there may be additional slides along the trail.

Trail maintenance functions on the Idaho portion of the HCNRA are performed by dedicated Forest Service staff and volunteers. Due to the extent of the damage, delays on alleviating trail concerns will occur. The Forest Service will work diligently to address these ongoing issues to provide for a safe and enjoyable experience for area users.

WWNF says it always appreciates trail and campsite condition reports from visitors; please call the Riggins HCNRA Office at 208-628-3916 with any updates.

Please anticipate heavy downfall on all trails in the Idaho portion of the HCNRA this summer and use caution especially if using pack stock. Don’t risk injuring your animals or yourself to get around debris.



Submitted Photo.

Suzan Ellis Jones.



Submitted Photo.

Carole Dyke.