

# Local

## ORP transparency tour

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Gurney believes that if the recommendations from that prior tour had been implemented, “Kitzhaber may have been caught sooner.”

Gurney pointed out that this tour had already involved state elected officials, different individuals at each stop, who offered up what it was like to “try to do good” from the inside.

In Medford, former Representative Dennis Richardson, and current representatives Carl Wilson and Sal Esquivel spoke.

In Salem, Reps. Jodi Hack and Mike Nearman spoke.

Those are just a few of the names who have joined in.

Said Currier, “The reason that we’re taking this so seriously is that we feel if we can’t get honesty and transparency in our government we really can’t solve any of the problems that we’re concerned about. It’s really kind of the common denominator we have to address.”

Currier added that the ideas gathered on the tour would be cataloged and used to perhaps draft the basis for a bill that may correct transparency problems.

He emphasized that whenever a majority party was in office, legislation of course favored that party, which had led other states to have legal consequences in place for lack of transparency—regardless of the party in power.

Currier pointed to polls that indicate most voters are concerned across the board about corruption through cronyism and keeping the citizen sovereign in government.

“For example,” he said, “When you make a records request in some of the neighboring states, there’s a time requirement on both

responding to the request as well as fulfilling the request. And there has to be a reasonable cost associated with fulfilling that request.”

Rep. Bentz took the mic and offered up some personal insight into the inner workings of the legislature.

“This is my eighth session,” Bentz said, “so I’m seeing where the lack of transparency is most.”

Bentz explained that budget bills spend a General Fund of \$20 billion and an All-Funds budget of \$66 billion, lined out in a five-month session. There are 60 House members: 35 Democrat, 25 Republican, and the Ways and Means Committee oversees the budget process.

“Often what happens is those of us in the room are told what the budget’s going to be and then there will be an argument... Those of us who are not in those rooms and see those discussions will not see those numbers until the last few days of the session. So for example, this county ended up with \$850K for the Pine-Valley Fire Station.”

Bentz said he learned about that allocation one day before it was voted on. “That \$850K came directly out of the General Fund. Now is that a lack of transparency? Hmm. Well, I would suggest it probably is. I think there’s an arrangement if you will, that the numbers and who’s going to end up with which funding is not made public until the last few days so there won’t be a huge amount of questioning by the rest of the legislature. That, to me, is an incorrect approach.”

Senate Bill 5507, The Christmas Tree Bill, includes one-time General Fund appropriations to the Department of Administrative Services for the following purposes for one line item affecting Baker County: \$850,000 for



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

Rep. Cliff Bentz talks about his experiences from inside the Oregon legislature.

disbursement to the Pine Valley Fire District for a new location and facility to house the Fire Department in the City of Halfway, Oregon.

Bentz added, “The big, important bills—those kinds of things aren’t going to be on the table until the last minute.”

He said, “If you have one party that’s in all of the major offices, then it’s hard not to think there aren’t conversations going on about actions that are going to be taken that are occurring off-site so to speak.

“It’s hard not to think that because there’s no reason they would all avoid each other at certain meetings... so there could be creeping, insidious almost—activities happening because people just aren’t in a position to worry about what they might say or what they might do,” Bentz said. “It’s certainly something that might be happening.”

“Sometimes as I watch these discussions, it seems as though decisions may have already been made,” Bentz said. “In fact, I’m pretty sure they have been.”

Currier and Bentz pointed out the importance audit function of the Secretary of State, which has 75 auditors.

Kody Justus asked about the use of the “emergency clause” in so many recent laws, which enacts those bills quicker, and, according to Bentz, also makes it harder to gather signatures to challenge them.

Currier added, “In truth, 75-80% of bills are not an emergency.”

Gurney concluded the meeting by listing some tidbits expressed at previous meetings, including a story shared by Rep. Hack who said Sen. Peter Courtney had informed her, “Corruption is not a problem in Oregon.”

This past session, seven ethics-related bills were introduced in the legislature. None survived.

On Wednesday morning, Currier, Gurney and Taylor went on a tour of the recent Comet / Windy Ridge burn area with Baker County Republican Central Committee Chair Suzan Ellis Jones and alternate delegate Keith Jones, forestry expert Arvid Andersen, and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) member Kody Justus with wife Heidi, who is also a precinct committee woman.

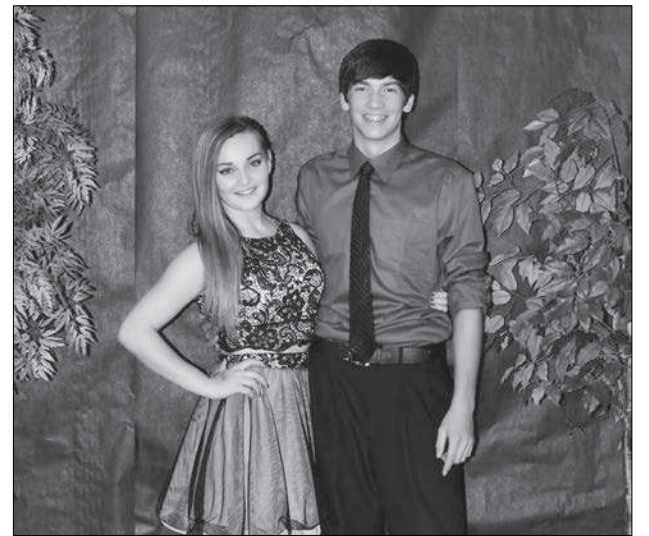
The tour then hit the road for Pendleton—the next stop. Meetings are also scheduled ahead for Eugene, Bend and Washington County.

## Pine-Eagle has Homecoming



Carmelita Holland / The Baker County Press

This court photo shows escorts and princesses. At far left are Homecoming King Moroni Jensen with Kerri Rowan; next in long gown, Kandice Holland with Leland Seggerman; third pair, Felicity Denig and Jeff Rice; fourth, Lacey Walker and Josiah Kellogg; fifth pair, far right are Queen Sarah Cooley and Wyatt Tyler.



Carmelita Holland / The Baker County Press

King Moroni Jensen and Homecoming Queen, Sarah Cooley.

BY CARMELITA HOLLAND  
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September 25th was a day to remember at the Pine-Eagle Charter School in Halfway, when the Homecoming Court and their escorts were introduced during halftime of the Pine Eagle Spartan football game with the Elgin Huskies.

The group was taken before the stand in three classic convertibles—a 1932 Ford Roadster and two bright red Corvettes.

Teacher, Robert Crawford, at the stand, read speeches written by each princess.

Homecoming Queen was Sarah Cooley and Homecoming King was Moroni Jensen. Both are Seniors. Princesses were: Lacey Walker, Senior Class, escorted by Josiah Kellogg; Felicity Denig, Junior Class, escorted by Jeff Rice; Kandice Holland, Sophomore Class, escorted by Leland Seggerman; and Kerri Rowan, Freshman Class, escorted by Moroni Jensen.

Soon after the outdoor presentation, more honors were bestowed inside the gymnasium during the girl’s Volleyball games with the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles, of Umatilla County.

Lacey Walker was named Miss Volleyball, and Wyatt Tyler was named Mr. Football.

The football game that day was won by the Spartans, 58 to 34 for the Elgin Huskies.

The Homecoming Ball was held in the old grade school cafeteria in Halfway and the theme was “Lost in the Jungle.”

## Taste of Baker draws eager crowd, music lovers

BY SUNNY WERNER  
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On a perfect, slightly breezy autumn Saturday evening, the downtown merchants of Baker City spread out their culinary wares for the annual “Taste of Baker.”

The unseasonably mild weather made the event even more enjoyable than usual, and hundreds of locals and visitors strolled Main Street.

Everyone from giggling babies to elderly cowboys wandered from store to store and table to table.

On offer were a variety of edibles, from tasty breads, Mexican meals, BBQ and grilled meats to deserts, candy, apple cider and wine.

Some stores that were not on Main Street were also participating, such as Sweet Wife Bakery on Resort.

Musicians played on the front porch of the adjoining house, and there was seating available for visitors to sit while nibbling their treats and listening to the music.

Another participating vendor was Earth and Vine



Sunny Werner / The Baker County Press

Those who purchased tickets and enjoyed food samples had music to eat by this year at the Taste of Baker.

wine bar on First Street. People traded chips (tokens) for food, and sat at outside tables enjoying the activities.

Folk met up with friends, exchanged tips on where they had found their favorite treats, and lingered to chat in the pleasant evening weather.

There was live music playing, and some visitors were dancing.

Sitting at the table selling the “chips” which were

used to purchase the food items was DeeDee Clark, an Historical Baker City board member.

Clark was busy handing over chips, handing out maps and menus, and answering question by the score.

She was assisted by another volunteer, Valerie Potter.

Clark explained that the event was one of HBC’s most popular, and always enjoyed by Baker residents

and visitors alike. Participating shops were open late, and most were enjoying the constant flow of traffic as those who came for the Taste of Baker wandered in to look at their wares.

As described in the magazine TravelOregon, “Hosted by Historic Baker City Inc. the Taste of Baker City is a perfect way to celebrate fall’s arrival and all things culinary.”

## Unity hosts Harvest Bazaar



Submitted Photo.

The Unity Harvest Bazaar was held Saturday, October 3rd, and attended by vendors and skilled artisans. The Burnt River Home Extension ladies sold baked goods and tickets for a quilt to be raffled off in January with all proceeds going for scholarships. The Burnt River FFA club cooked and served lunch and goodies. The door prize was won by Wayne Morin of Hereford, pictured above.