

2015: A Year in Retrospect

March

March 20

Ash appointed sheriff. The Baker County Board of Commissioners welcomed a full house once again on Wednesday, March 18, at the regular bi-monthly session at the Baker County Courthouse, as the decision was made to appoint Lieutenant Travis Ash as interim Baker County Sheriff, effective May 1.

McCarty victorious. The court case Baker County versus David McCarty and his business Columbia Basin Helicopter was resolved when on March 6, 2015, Oregon Circuit Court Judge Ronald Pahl handed down a decision in favor of McCarty and his agricultural helicopter business.

Wyden's town hall. Last Saturday morning democratic U.S. Senator Ron Wyden arrived in Baker City to hold a town hall at the Senior Center as part of this year's annual tour. The group of around 65 citizens who arrived to hear him speak, and two separate protests—one involving a giant balloon from Fight for the Future against the Trans-Pacific Partnership—made for a busy parking lot.

Partial summary judgement granted for Langrell case. Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Ronald Pahl entered a ruling Friday, March 13 in favor of partial summary judgement for plaintiffs Richard and Lynne Langrell. The Langrells filed suit against the City of Baker City about a year ago, claiming the City charged double sewer and water rates for the motel they own, The Always Welcome Inn.

March 27

Beef. The Baker County Cattlewomen and Cattlemen joined forces to serve over 300 people, including students, parents and faculty, a barbecue beef tri-tip lunch as part of an annual tradition in its 6th year, last Thursday, March 19th, at South Baker Intermediate.

Heritage Museum display honors men and women in uniform. The exhibit is aptly named "Honoring those that served."

Fire Chief focuses on prevention. Mark John has only been at the helm as the new Baker City Fire Chief since January, and one of the areas that he is planning on taking immediate action on is building inspections with the focal point being downtown.

Walden speaks at two events. Last Saturday was a full evening for Congressman Greg Walden who held a town hall at the VAOI on Main Street just prior to attending the Baker County Republicans' Annual Banquet just down the street.

April

April 3

Bentz does town hall blitz. Last Friday, Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario) held a series of five public town halls across Baker County, with additional town halls the following day in adjoining counties within his district.

City may settle Langrell suit. In light of a recent ruling by Umatilla County Judge Ronald Pahl, Baker City Council intends to offer Richard Langrell, who currently still sits on the Baker City Council, a settlement agreement. Judge Pahl's ruling would exclude bringing in what the City considers important evidentiary materials at trial in the lawsuit of Richard W. Langrell v. City of Baker City. As a result, Thursday's scheduled trial was canceled.

Sumpter fire—trooper carries woman to safety. On March 29, 2015, shortly after noon, Oregon State Police (OSP) Senior Trooper Brad Duncan of the Fish & Wildlife Division in Baker City, was patrolling in the town of Sumpter, southwest of Baker City, when he saw what appeared to be a vehicle on fire with three people standing nearby.

April 10

Pavilion construction begins. It has been a long time coming! The Baker City Geiser-Pollman bandstand pavilion project began as only a conversation nearly 10 years ago.

Commissioners clarify coordination/cooperation stance. Last Friday, an article published in *The Baker City Herald* with the headline, "Bennett, Kerns thank USFS" launched a flurry of calls and emails spanning hundreds of eastern Oregon citizens, including members of Forest Access For All (FAFA), media and various other groups and residents.



Gina K. Swartz / The Baker County Press

15 golden shovels hit the ground Monday at noon to break ground for the new bandstand in the park.

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee on a three-to-two vote, strictly along party lines. Democratic Senators Floyd Prozanski and Ginny Burdick are SB 941's chief sponsors.

April 17

Council's sets goals. A dusting of spring snow fell on the metal rooftops visible through the Council Chambers' windows as Baker City's City Council met primarily to discuss 2015-2016 Council goals, City fees, and vote to finalize the settlement in Councilman Richard Langrell's lawsuit against the City.

Marijuana debate hits County level. The full Baker County Board of Commissioners met Wednesday with an agenda spanning marijuana dispensaries to mining to committee appointments.

Gamer Haven opens. Scott Violette and partner, Josh Neilson, rented out half of the American Legion building and did a soft opening.

Lieutenant moves onward and upward. On Wednesday, co-workers, family and friends in the community held a farewell celebration in the Council Chambers of Baker City Hall for Lieutenant Kirk McCormick, who is resigning from the Baker City Police Department after 20 years of service, in order to relocate to Scotland, South Dakota, to become its new Chief of Police.

April

April 24

Pine-Eagle teacher files suit over active shooter drill. An elementary school teacher in Halfway filed a civil rights lawsuit last Friday afternoon against the Pine-Eagle School District 61; Alpine Alarm Communications and Construction, LLC; the members of the Pine-Eagle School Board at that time.

Nonpartisan issue heats up. Initiative 1-63, on the ballot, asks a simple question, "Shall Baker County commissioner positions become nonpartisan in 2015?"

Baker Rural wins fire service trophy. On Saturday, area fire service agencies came together to participate in the 11th annual fire service exercise known throughout the agencies as "The Scavenger Hunt." In the end, the Baker Rural Fire Protection District took home the four-foot-high trophy.

School Board fills empty seat. The Baker 5J School Board responded to the resignation of board member Kyle Knight by appointing Melissa Irvine to the open position during the school board meeting Tuesday, April 21.

May

May 1

Travel Oregon stops by. The Palm Court at the historic Geiser Grand provided the backdrop for a Travel Oregon meeting on Tuesday.

OGEC can't address ethics complaint. Early Monday morning, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) confirmed receipt of a formal request for review of Baker County Commissioner Tim Kerns' involvement during the appointment of his wife, Jan Kerns, to the Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) during their March 18, 2015 meeting.

County bans pot. On Wednesday, April 29, 2015, the Baker County Board of Commissioners passed Ordinance No. 2015-02, with the title "An Ordinance Regulating Marijuana Within Baker County; And Declaring An Emergency."

ODOT holds huge career day. Blue skies and warm temperatures prevailed as 348 students from 20 schools including Baker High's Technical Institute and Burnt River, had a day out of the classroom Thursday April 23, for the Eastern Oregon Construction and Utility Career Day hosted by Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).

May 8

'Mysteries at the Museum' films in Baker City. About six weeks ago, a film crew, now confirmed to be from the Travel Channel's popular show, "Mysteries at the Museum," filmed in Baker City—at least in part at the Baker Heritage Museum.

Baker City to host Oregon Sniper Challenge. The men who may very well be the top 50 snipers in the entire world are coming to Baker City next month for the Oregon Sniper Challenge—an event that tests the mettle of the best of the best.

Greater Bowen Valley RFD welcomes new chief. On Saturday, volunteers and staff from multiple agencies came together at the Greater Bowen Valley fire station on Sumpter Stage Highway to celebrate a grand reopening of sorts, including a brand new Fire Chief, Jim Devlin.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

May 15

Friends of NRA raises \$9.5K for Sierra Bingham. Saturday evening, the Powder River Friends of the National Rifle Association (NRA) gathered at the Elks in Baker City for their well-attended annual fund raiser, raising funds as well for the Bingham family's medical bills.

Greater Bowen Valley RFD. L-R back: Dave Downing, Brent Kragness, Keith Jensen, Penny Devlin, Allen Jensen, Tabbitha Jensen, Cal Foster, Don Copley, Chris Galiszewski, and Steve Ritch. Front L-R: Jim Devlin, Gabriel Jensen and Rick Badgley.

Inmate dies of meth overdose. On Saturday evening, 28-year-old Joshua Pantle was pronounced dead at St. Alphonsus—Baker City after showing signs of medical distress while incarcerated at the Baker County Jail.

Man leads police on mountain chase. Damon Robinson is a registered sex offender with a past record including burglary. After ditching his stuck truck near Marble Creek, he fled on foot, only to be captured by an armed, law-abiding citizen the following day.

Barley's customers Tip-a-Cop. The local Special Olympics' annual fundraiser brought in \$1.5K this time around.

May 22

Haggen opens its doors. Last Friday, the Albertsons store on Campbell Street became a thing of the past as the recent purchase by Haggen reached its final step.

Forest Access for All Banquet. Renowned public lands expert Fred Kelly Grant and Montana State Rep. Kerry White speak to packed house at Sunridge.

Human trafficking in the spotlight. Soroptimists hold seminar, fundraiser to combat growing issue.

Nonpartisan issue goes down in flames. 1-63, the initiative spearheaded by Randy Joseph and supported by the political committee "Baker County People over Politics" (Randy Joseph, Kate Rohner, Elliot Averett, Sharon Defrees, Mary Jane Guyer and Hayden Perkins) was defeated Tuesday night. 1-63 was opposed by the Baker County Republicans.

May 29

Catfish Derby. The 30th Annual Huntington Lion's Club Catfish Derby was held Memorial weekend in Huntington.

Thief steals bag from paramedic. An unknown suspect took a large blue canvas bag containing at least \$200 in medical supplies out of Baker City Fire Department Lieutenant and paramedic Donald Taggart's vehicle.

Memorial Day. Baker County is home to one of the largest number of military veterans per capita in the state of Oregon and this fact is highlighted every Memorial Day at Mt. Hope Cemetery.