

BUSINESS: New D&J Taco Shop proves popular from first day. **PAGE 3**



LOCAL: City receives new Alyssa Peterson painting as donation. **PAGE 8**



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Hoopes to challenge Ash for sheriff position

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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On Wednesday, long-time Sheriff's Deputy John Hoopes announced that he will be filing this week, challenging Sheriff Travis Ash for that position in the upcoming May election.

Ash was appointed by Baker County Commissioners last year after former sheriff Mitch Southwick resigned from the position.

At the time, Hoopes had also submitted a letter of interest to County Commissioners, who ultimately appointed Ash to fill the remainder of Southwick's term.

Hoopes issued the following letter:

"My name is John Hoopes and I am campaigning for the office of Baker County Sheriff. I have proudly served and protected our community as a Sheriff's Deputy for

15 years. I started my career with the Baker County Sheriff's Office in the Reserve Deputy Program under Sheriff Terry Speelman in 2000. During my time as a Reserve Deputy, I attended Eastern Oregon University and worked as a temporary parole officer, prior to being hired in 2001 as a Corrections Deputy for the Baker County Jail. In 2002, I was hired as a Patrol Deputy and certified through the Oregon De-

partment of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) as a police officer. To date, I have earned my basic, intermediate and advanced police officer certifications. As a deputy, I have also participated with the regional SWAT team as an MRAP driver, as well as, the Baker County Search and Rescue as a rescue diver."

SEE HOOPES PAGE 12



Submitted Photo.

John Hoopes announced this week that he will compete for Baker County Sheriff.

70 mph speed limit coming to Oregon in March

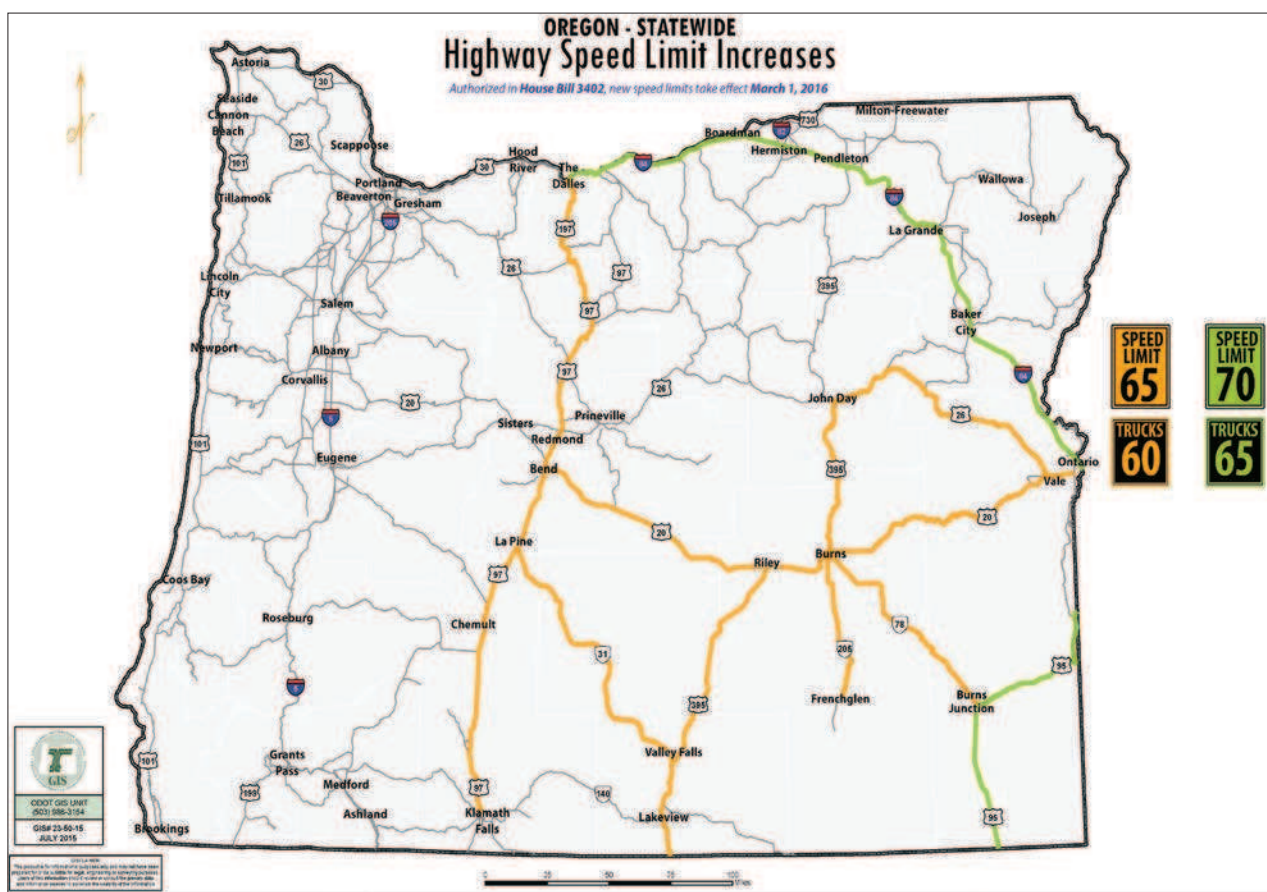


Photo courtesy of ODOT.

The above speed limits will be in place for Oregonians on March 1 of this year.

BY GINA K. SWARTZ
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With the passing of House Bill 3402, parts of Oregon will see a speed limit increase. There will be an increase from 65 to 70 on Interstate 84 from The Dalles to the Idaho border and the limit will bump up to 65 on several secondary highways in Central and Eastern Oregon, including portions of U.S. 20, U.S. 26, U.S. 95, U.S. 97, U.S. 197, U.S. 395, OR 31, OR 78 and OR 205.

According to Tom Strandberg with Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Region 5 Public Affairs headquartered in La Grande, ODOT crews have been busily preparing for the changes which will take place on March 1, 2016.

In an email Strandberg wrote, "ODOT has been preparing by modifying passing zones to accommodate the changes and installing new sign posts where needed. For the department, there is quite a bit of work to prepare for the change. Ordering signs/posts, evaluating curves for the increased speeds, identifying where new curve warning signs need to go up and modifying passing lane striping (painted lines) to take into account the increased speeds."

Strandberg indicated ODOT has been working with communities along the impacted routes to identify where speeds need to be reduced such as before entering city limits as well as other factors and concerns.

He noted motorist safety as ODOT's focus. He said,

"Our main concern is that motorists keep safety in mind and that with the increased speeds there is an increase in responsibility to drive according to the conditions of the road. Everyone still needs to pay attention to conditions and slow down when pavement might be wet or icy, or when visibility might be limited due to darkness, fog, blowing snow, smoke, dust, etc."

He went on to state, "Work was started last fall, before winter's frozen ground. New signs will go up starting March 1. All the new speed signs should be up on the interstate March 2 and on impacted secondary highways within a few days of that day."

The Oregon State Police Baker City work site was contacted for information but did not respond before this article went to print.

One Law Enforcement Officer, who did not wish to be identified, did state that they believed the impending increase would be a good thing since many motorists are already travelling at a higher rate of speed coming into Oregon from Idaho, where the speed limit is 80. They believed that it could actually decrease the number of crashes with a lessening of the change in speed limits. They stated also that they would like to see it increase even more and expressed regret that the I-5 corridor on the west side of the state was not increasing as well.

"I think it is needed," the officer said. Additional background information, a map of impacted routes, news releases, photos and video can be found at www.tinyurl.com/OR-speed2016.

New 911 Call Center Director hired

Baker County announced this week that Hope Lindsey has been named Director of the Baker County 911 Consolidated Dispatch Center.

Lindsey brings fourteen years of experience working within a 911 Dispatch Center. Her hiring was the result of a nationwide search.

She will assume all responsibilities of the Director position from interim Director Jerry Boyd effective February 16, 2016. Hope Lindsey.

Commissioner Harvey said in a press release he is pleased to bring Lindsey on board and believes her wealth of knowledge will greatly benefit the County's 911 operations.

County Executive Assistant Heidi Martin said that no additional information on Lindsey's background was available in time for print.



Submitted Photo.

Three charged in pathway assault

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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Jason David Brown of Baker City and out-of-state friends, Christopher Wade Wymbs and Bryan William Morris have all been formally indicted on two counts each of Assault in the Fourth Degree for their involvement in an assault that happened November 14, 2015, on the Leo Adler Pathway behind Ace Hardware.

District Attorney Daniel Norris of Malheur County is serving as the special District Attorney for Baker County during this case due to a personal conflict of interest involving a member of the local office's staff.

The three defendants are accused of intentionally and unlawfully causing physical injury to Anthony Constantine and Trevor Shankle.

If convicted, Brown, Wymbs and Morris each face up to one year in prison for each count.

Friday Mostly cloudy and seasonable. Highs in the mid 30s. Chance of snow showers at night is 40%. Lows in the mid 20s.

Saturday Cloudy and warmer with a slight chance of snow showers. Highs near 40. Chance of precipitation is 20%. Lows in the mid 20s.

Sunday Mostly cloudy and continued warmer temperatures. Highs in the low 40s. Lows in the mid 20s.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.

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OREGON TRAIL ELECTRIC CO-OP

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