

# Local

## Economic Development: mechanics needed, mining summit coming to town

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The Baker County Economic Development Council (EDC) held its regular Board meeting on Thursday, April 14, 2016, 9:00 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, which included a discussion with local automotive repair business owner J.R. “Grumpy” Streifel, who spoke about the struggle to find and retain good mechanics.

Present from the Board were Chair Craig Ward, Baker County Commission Chair Bill Harvey, Baker Technical Institute (BTI) Director Jerry Peacock, Baker City Manager Mike Kee, and Baker City Councilman Richard Langrell.

Attendance also included Baker County Economic Development Director Greg Smith, Smith’s assistant, Julee Hicks, Blue Mountain Community College Small Business Development Center (BMCC SBDC) Advisor Jeff Nelson, Baker City Council member Dan Lowe, Baker County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau Director Shelly Cutler, Historic Baker City (HBC) President Larry Abell, Baker City Council member Rosemary Abell, Baker City Mayor Kim Mosier, Lisa Dawson and Mike Hogan, of Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD), retired BMCC SBDC Advisor Bob Savage, and BMCC Dean Carl Melle.

Craig called the meeting to order, and introductions were made of those present. The previous meeting’s minutes were approved, noting no additions or changes, with a motion from Kee, and a second from Langrell.

Harvey provided a Commission Chair update, speaking about timber salvage projects, includ-

ing present, and upcoming sales. This includes the present work in progress on Dooley Mountain, with salvage and danger tree removal.

Nelson provided a BMCC SBDC update, including introducing Melle, and speaking about business expansions. He said that, through the program Hatch Oregon (the Baker County Chamber of Commerce has a component), four business owners have completed classes, and will possibly be pitching their Community Public Offering (CPO) ideas in mid-June. He said that the next Pub Talk will be on May 18, 2016, 5:30 p.m., at Lefty’s Taphouse, on the topic of Economic Development, followed by two more Pub Talks, later this year.

Cutler provided a Chamber update, mentioning an open staff position available at the Visitors Bureau. She said the Chamber is working actively on three projects: the Relay For Life, on June 10, 2016; the Miners Jubilee Parade, on July 16, 2016; and the first annual Soap Box Derby, a fundraiser, on August 20, 2016, the poster of which she displayed for attendees to see. She said Chamber membership, which has increased significantly this year, is probably around 300 currently.

Dawson provided an Economic Development District update, speaking about some difficult projects in the Richland, and Halfway areas. The difficulties include installation of a sewer line through sites of archaeological remains, and the cost of the projects, at least \$100,000 so far.

Peacock provided a BTI update, speaking about a video titled “The Promise Of Oregon,” which showcases the efforts of BTI students, and the accomplishments of BTI.

He said, through grant funding of \$350,000, the

BTI welding facility has received updates, including electrical and other work. This project is ongoing, with more updates to be implemented. He also said that through the Brownfield program, students are working, among other projects, on assessments for the Lime plant, near Huntington.

Kee provided a City update, and he said that the goal-setting meeting last week included comments about the desire to have more City representation within the EDC. Mosier added that several Councilors have expressed the need to have a more active City role in economic development.

Smith began an EDC Director update by speaking about Grumpy’s Auto Repair, owned by Streifel, at 225 H Street, in Baker City. Smith visited Streifel, and the facility, and he said that there’s a major struggle to find trained mechanics.

Streifel said that it’s difficult to find individuals willing to commit to working full-time. As an example, he said there was recently a potential employee who didn’t show up to finish the interview process, because, he said, to Streifel’s surprise and disappointment, he was making too much money on unemployment.

Streifel expressed his frustration, and he had called different colleges throughout the years, to speak about recruiting from the schools, with little success. He spoke with Smith, and Smith arranged an appointment with staff at Portland Community College (PCC), with a training location in Nampa, Idaho.

He said that he’s impressed with the facility, and he’s found PCC as a solution to finding more trained mechanics, and to bringing more people to Baker City. He said that he

sees issues with younger generations, including lack of enthusiasm with commitment to work, and working towards goals, which is discouraging to him. This includes some adults, too, he said.

Streifel said that his company offers many benefits, like training, medical insurance, sick leave, 401(k), etc., and that his goal is to have the biggest, and cleanest shop in the area, with planned bay expansions hopefully in the near future. Despite the nickname “Grumpy,” Smith said that Streifel is one of the most gracious individuals he’s known.

Smith mentioned the next Eastern Oregon Mining & Aggregate Development Summit, scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, 2016, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Baker County Event Center, 2600 East Street. The event, sponsored by the Oregon Mining Association, Oregon Concrete & Aggregate Producers Association, Oregonians In Action, Baker County Economic Development, and the Eastern Oregon Mining Association, includes a variety of speakers. Topics will include the importance of mining to Eastern Oregon’s economy; legislative updates; legal updates; and mining on Federal land.

Among other topics, Smith spoke about the issues with local business, Tasty Bake, currently owned by Cereal Holding Company, of Illinois. He said that Cereal Holding Company (currently being sued, along with Tasty Bake, in Baker County Circuit Court), has filed for bankruptcy (this could not be confirmed as of this writing). He said that a local company has expressed interest in purchasing the Tasty Bake property on 8th Street, but pending litigation would delay that process.

## BCVIBE

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Savage said that the position would probably last three to six months, and that she wishes to begin the procedure to advertise, receive applications, etc., as soon as possible. She said that numerous, young business owners expressed excitement about the position, and about marketing Baker City, and Baker County, and they would like to assist in some way, because they desire to have more people like them move to the area.

Kee said that he spoke with Davis, and that, initially, an RFP (a Request for Proposal) would be what’s most likely needed. He said he would probably have that completed by the end of this week.

The purpose of the Development Contract Facilitator, according to the rough draft of the scope of work, is “... to serve as a catalyst, community mobilizer, community change encourager, partnership broker, and the builder of the capacity of BCVibe community initiative. (To) bring together local partners, to facilitate the emergence, and strengthening of community-led initiatives, to improve, and sustain the well-being, and livelihood of our community.

The rough draft also explained the purpose of BCVibe: “BCVibe is a community initiative to attract the ‘creative class’ (ages 25-45) to Baker City, an age group that is currently declining in Baker City. This is an effort to stimulate, and sustain the economy in our community. We believe that Baker City has the attraction to draw this age group here. Baker City has everything that a young couple is looking for, including (but not limited to) affordable housing, visual appeal, an active outdoor lifestyle, a walkable downtown, an up-and-coming artisan community, and an opportunity to open new businesses in Baker City, including in Historic Baker City’s vibrant downtown core.”

The group discussed the issues with traditional funding sources, versus non-traditional, in the area of art/artisan craftsmanship, and with bringing individuals in to the community, by providing appealing incentives, and by making funding and housing/rental processes more streamlined.

Bishop gave examples of artwork, and the Farmers Market, as appealing draws, and he said that there needs to be a focus on how to market the area, including looking at non-traditional funding sources in order to bring people in. Rosemary emphasized the quality of the instruction available from area schools, another prime selling point.

## Election tidbits

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The Independent Party, now a major party in Oregon, opened their nomination process to non-affiliated voters giving them the opportunity to request an Independent Party ballot for this Primary Election only. The Oregon Secretary of State’s office sent postcards out to all non-affiliated voters with this information notifying them to request this ballot in writing from the local election office by April 26, 2016.

April 26, 2016 is the deadline for any political party changes and for registrations for those electors new to the state of Oregon. One can register to vote or update their current registration by returning a voter registration card to the Election office by 5pm or online at oregonvotes.gov by 11:59pm.

2. When will ballots be mailed in Baker County? Baker County ballots will be delivered to the Baker Post Office on Wednesday, April 27th. Voters who do not receive a ballot through the mail by Wednesday, May 4 should call the Election office at 541-523-8207.

Ballots are not forwardable. Therefore, if an elector has moved or changed a mailing address without notifying us it is likely their ballot will be returned to us as undeliverable. It is important that electors update their voter registration with their current address or for a name change.

3. When will Voters’ Pamphlets be delivered? The Oregon Secretary of State’s office produces and prints their Voter’s Pamphlet. Baker County’s Voters’ can go to the County internet site bakercounty.org to read about local candidates and Measurers. The State Voter’s Pamphlet will be delivered, one per residential household, between April 20th– 22nd. If one is not received, the post offices and the Election office have additional copies or available online at oregonvotes.gov. It is the candidate’s choice whether or not to be submit a statement in the Voter’s Pamphlet for a fee.

4. Why do some voters receive two ballots? If a voter changes their party close to the registration deadline, they may receive two ballots. Ballot packets are assembled for mailing prior to the registration deadline because of volume. Only one ballot will count. The first ballot is inactivated when the second ballot is issued.

5. When are write-In votes tallied? Write-in votes will not be tallied on Election Day. The abstracting process for determining all the various write-in names will begin after Election Day and continue until completed. It is anticipated that those results will be released at the same time the election is certified on June 6th.

When there is a candidate listed on a contest, the write-in votes are only abstracted for names if the total number of write-ins equal or exceeds the votes for the listed candidate.

Per OAR 165-007-0030, the Vote By Mail Manual, misspelling or abbreviations of the names of candidates are disregarded by the Election Board if it cannot be ascertained from the ballot for which the vote was intended. A first initial is not sufficient, but an abbreviated version of a first name is allowed (example: Bob for Robert).

SEE ELECTION PAGE 11

## Baker City FD wins exercise



Photo courtesy of Chris Galiszewski

Baker City won the 2016 Baker County Fire Service Task Performance Exercise on April 16. The exercise is held annually. L-R: BJ Lynch, Tabitha Jensen, and Brandon Hargous (Jason Jacobs, on team not pictured).