

# Local

## First Friday meeting covers wide variety

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Baker County Commission Chairman Bill Harvey hosted another installment of First Friday with the Commissioner, on Friday, May 6, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, discussing a variety of topics, including mining technology, local grocer options, and Baker Heritage Museum exhibits.

Joining Harvey for this monthly, informal conversation were Chuck Chase, Bobbie Danser, Tork and Wanda Ballard, Dave Hunsaker, and Ed Hardt.

The discussion began with comment about several business grand openings last weekend by Harvey, followed by the mention from Wanda, regarding approval for the sale of a 2.74 acre County-owned parcel in the Elkhorn Industrial Park, to growing and expanding business Hop Heaven, owned by Ted and Jodie Hausotter, who also own Natural Structures. Harvey expressed excitement about the expansion the Hausotters have planned, including new structures, and employees.

Danser asked about the demise of local pizza dough processing business Tasty Bake, which saw an ownership change in the fall of 2014, followed by the eventual cease in distribution of its product, and employee layoffs. Tasty Bake, and Illinois-based Cereal Holding Company are currently being sued in Baker County Circuit Court, by Tasty Bake former owners Peter and Brenda Johnson, and Lesaffre Yeast Corporation (these and other issues were reported in the Friday, April 8, 2016, and Friday, April 22, 2016 issues of The Baker County Press. Further problems are not yet fully detailed). Yasar Samarah is current President of Tasty Bake, and Vice President of Cereal Holding Company.

Harvey said companies Hop Heaven, Natural Structures, Marvin Wood Products, Behlen Manufacturing, and Grumpy's Repair are doing very well, with implemented and

planned expansions and employee additions, resulting in a boost to the local economy.

Harvey commented on the huge hit to the local economy from the Tasty Bake layoffs, and the layoffs caused by the closure of the local Albertsons store (Haggen had briefly—or less than six months—taken Albertsons place, due to Federal Trade Commission anti-monopoly requirements, however, Haggen had failed and closed its doors, leaving only Safeway as the sole major local grocer. Albertsons is merged with Safeway, and the company has both buildings leased, one of which is vacant for now).

The group speculated about the future of Albertsons, Safeway, and other local grocer options. Hunsaker asked whether Harvey had heard if a mid-sized grocer may replace Safeway, in the event Safeway is moved into the former location of Albertsons, a bigger building (owned by Greg Sackos, through his company, BTS II, LLC). Harvey said that's the best-case scenario, but there's no indication from the current owner of the Safeway property (Florida-based KIN Properties, through Muffrey, LLC) that is a given. He did say that he expects to see at least two local grocers to be in operation in the near future.

Harvey said The Country Cottage Cafe on 10th Street is currently closed, has seen a change in ownership, and may be transformed into a steakhouse restaurant. Wanda said that Haines Mercantile is an important grocer to support, and that Baker City's 10th Street definitely needs some kind of market, which prompted the Ballards, Harvey, and Hardt to reminisce about their previous grocer work experience, and former Wilson's Warehouse Market, which was located where Baker County Family YMCA currently is, on Pocahontas Road. Harvey agreed about the need for some kind of grocer in that area of Baker City, and Tork said current Safeway

employees need to be informed of the company's intentions (the group discussed the importance of employer/employee relations).

Hardt began a discussion regarding miners dealing with issues with clay, to which he said his suggestion is to acquire a longer trommel (he said his is 5 feet by 20 feet, but he'd like a longer one), an inclined, rotating metal tube with screening, used to separate material. Danser and Chase (Danser is Treasurer, and Chase is Executive Director, of the Eastern Mining Association, or EOMA) echoed Hardt's suggestion, Danser said maybe a trommel that's 30 feet long or longer would be best, and Chase said it's difficult to break down clay. Hardt said he and another local miner, Ken Anderson, are currently experiencing that difficulty.

Chase elaborated on the issues, stating that clay, with negative ion particles, attracts the positive ions in gold (he said clay contains various rare Earth minerals), and the goal, ultimately, is to break down that electrical attraction, which is problematic. He said that aluminum, also present in clay, actually is a key factor in causing the bonding issue, making the clay stickier, but in order to break down the clay, the aluminum virtually needs to be destroyed in the process. Hardt said he necessarily has to run the material through the trommel again, to break it down further.

Harvey asked Chase how he locates rare earth minerals, and Danser responded that an assay, an analysis used to determine the components of a sample, is sent to an organization located in Canada. Chase said he also uses a dowsing rod to locate minerals, which is a method that has been employed by some of this reporter's family members, to locate water, etc. He said as he ages, his dowsing ability seems to become more refined.

The discussion touched on the subject of scandium, a rare Earth element, which Chase and Hardt pointed



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First Friday: a small, informal crowd.

out is a key component in the manufacture of body armor. Harvey asked Chase about the potential for some small-scale scandium and other mining, and Chase said he's looking into that.

Hunsaker asked Harvey how the winter ski season fared at Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort (ALMR), and Harvey said that it was very successful. Harvey spoke about some upcoming events to be held there, including the popular, two-day Elkhorn Archers-hosted Super Shoot, on July 23, 2016. Harvey said that there are also planned projects, including improvements to the water supply system, and that ALMR is applying to manage the park and other services year-round, whereas now, the State currently handles much of that.

Hunsaker, Vice Chairman of the Baker Heritage Museum Board, said that the Museum is working on a new, two-year exhibit, to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the movie "Paint Your Wagon," filmed in Baker County, and that this year will be the last for the Museum's military exhibit. He said he would like anyone who has anything associated with the filming, etc., of "Paint Your Wagon," and who desires the items to be a part of the exhibit, to notify the Museum.

He said the Museum will be contacting members of the community, in order to return the items from the military exhibit, and that efforts will be made,

including his suggestion of a City/County committee, the core of which would be Baker County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Shelly Cutler, and Blue Mountain Small Business Development Center Advisor Jeff Nelson, to collect items County-wide, for the "Paint Your Wagon" exhibit, and to maybe hold a community dance, etc., possibly during Miner's Jubilee. Hunsaker said that Clint Eastwood and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, one of Hunsaker's and Harvey's favorite bands, will be contacted, to request their inclusion in the celebration. Hunsaker said the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band will be in the Prineville area, in June.

Wanda commented about the positive improvements to the Richland area, including the local park, and Harvey said that projects are planned, and that work is ongoing, in order to continue with Baker County Parks Department, and other efforts. She also voiced appreciation for Harvey's presence at all of the different communities throughout the County. Harvey said that's an important job, and it's what he's supposed to do.

Danser asked about the current timber salvage/sales situation, and Harvey said that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is doing well, with a planned 500-acre sale (two, 250-acre Categorical Exclusions, or CEs). Chase voiced concern about access to the Baker

City watershed, in case of a wildfire, and Harvey responded that he's been relating this very thought.

Further discussing the topic of logging, this week, Harvey said, the BLM stated the possibility of finishing up paperwork, regarding a potential 1,000-acre timber sale (he had taken a scouting tour with representatives of the BLM, he said). He said negotiations with the United States Forest Service (USFS), regarding logging, salvage and timber sales, has been difficult.

Harvey spoke about the discussion at several of the County Commission sessions, regarding guidance to the County, from the Americans Stewards of Liberty, a subject he said has caused some tension, however, one of the points he has made clear previously is that funds were raised privately, in order to secure this guidance, to help remedy government-to-government coordination issues.

In addition to a brief discussion about County Commissioner Position No. 1 candidates (the group predicted a win for Kody Justus), Danser said that Nelson would be a huge asset, if he were able to become a member of the Baker City Council.

First Friday with the Commissioner is held on the first Friday of each month, in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse. The next discussion is scheduled for Friday, June 3, 2016, 9 a.m.

## County, Sunridge talk more about MOU

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a work session, on Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers, of the Baker County Courthouse, with two topics on the agenda: the majority of the discussion about a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County and the Sunridge Inn, covering penalty charges on Transient Lodging Tax payments; and the possibility of inter-hospital, non-emergent services provided locally, by Med Transport, Inc.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett, and Tim Kerns, and

Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

Attendance also included Lisa Wilson, and Alan Mendenhall, of the Sunridge Inn, Baker County Transient Lodging Tax Committee (TLTC) Chair Carrie Folkman and other TLTC members, Chris Arvidson, of Med Transport, Inc., Baker County Administrative Service Director Christena Cook, Baker City Manager Mike Kee, Baker County 911 Consolidated Dispatch Center Director Lindsey Hope, John and Ramona Creighton, and Kody Justus.

Harvey called the meeting to order, and he explained the format of the work session, during which no decision concerning either topic would be made, until at least the next, regular

session, on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 9 a.m. He asked Folkman to speak about the MOU, and the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) penalty charges, as Bennett had asked previously how the TLTC had arrived at its decision regarding this issue.

Folkman said in 2006, the county-wide TLT was established, having been a city-wide TLT prior to that point. She said that 70% of the funds collected is utilized for marketing, 25% for economic development, and 5% for administrative fees, per state law. She said use of the funds includes administration of the Visitors Bureau, employment of a Marketing Director, and grants.

She said that if there are any grievances by a lodger,



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Lisa Wilson of the Sunridge Inn addresses the issue of TLT penalties for the second week in a row.

per county ordinance, a lodger (such as Sunridge Inn) can have its case reviewed by the TLTC, for possible penalty forgiveness. She said that in all cases she has seen in her tenure (about 13 years), while some penalty charges have been forgiven, and

some haven't, the TLTC has never allowed interest payment forgiveness.

She provided the Board with a TLT payment history for Sunridge Inn, explaining that in the last quarter of 2009, a penalty was assessed for a late payment, and again, in the

first quarter of 2010, both penalties totaling \$8,975, and the combined penalties had been forgiven.

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