

Local

Walden town hall

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Born in Baker City, Tim was raised with an appreciation for agriculture, and his family farm has led him to attend Oregon State University.” He jokingly said, “Hmmm...I guess you did okay, in spite of that (followed by laughter). We Ducks have to get our jabs in (Walden attended the University of Oregon).” He continued with the statement, explaining that Kerns pursued a degree in Agricultural Engineering at an accelerated pace, while at the same time meeting his future wife of 52 years, and the couple, both with degrees, had returned to Baker County, to return to ranching.

Walden said Kerns’ ranching operation grew, and he his service includes the School District Budget Board, as President of both the Baker County Livestock Growers and the Farm Bureau, Regional Vice President of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, the Board of several national farm lending associations, and as County Commissioner.

“...I know I can always count on Tim’s work ethic, and knowledge of Baker County, to help work through the issues we face, to make sure the needs of the local community will not be ignored by the federal government. Whether it was trying to stop the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) from regulating the local cement plant out of existence—which we’ve teamed up to prevent—and killing hundreds of jobs, or some of the ongoing problems, such as red tape cutting off Baker County miners from being part of a rich, local mining history, or attempts to limit local access to National Forests, I knew I could always count on Tim for his valuable input, as we crafted solutions...Please join me in recognizing my good friend, Commissioner Tim Kerns, for his many years of leadership, and service, to Baker County,” Walden said, followed by applause from the crowd.

Walden continued the meeting, first speaking about the proposed designation of the Owyhee Canyonlands, as a national monument, which he is strongly opposed to. He said the designation is about limiting access to resources, limiting mining, and removing livestock from ranges, and he has pushed back on the issue, with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, and President Obama, as well as others, to emphasize the designation is unnecessary, unneeded, and unwanted, and there are already layers of protections and management for the area proposed to be designated. He said 90% of the voters of Malheur County opposed the designation. He said “every tool in the books” is being used, in order to prevent the designation.

Walden mentioned the Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act, which is a bill that alters a variety of existing programs, expanding access to, and opportunities for, hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting. He said the bill strengthens and supports the opportuni-



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Walden listens to a question from rancher Curt Martin of North Powder.

ties to recreate, on public lands, and limits governmental control.

He said legislation is moving forward (it passed in the House), in order to to implement much-needed reform of the Equal Access to Justice Act, which he said is “...the ATM for the other side, to be able to sue, and get paid, all the time...” The legislation would require reporting on the amount of funds being dispersed, and to whom, he said.

After a decade, Walden said, 28 mining permits were finally approved, in the Granite area. He said it should never take that long, but the approvals are a good sign, for other actions, moving forward.

He spoke about the Community Mental Health Act of 1963, signed into law, by President Kennedy, which initiated the government’s involvement in mental health. He said there are now 112 programs, and \$130 billion spent a year, but clearly, the programs are not working, including the lack of treatment (there is one doctor per every 2,000 juveniles with mental health issues; and, one is ten times less likely to commit a violent act, if access to mental health care is available, for example, Walden said, explaining that the list of negative statistics goes on, and on). Part of the current effort is extending mental health treatment access to rural communities, through psychiatric “teleshelp,” and re-authorization of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act.

Walden also talked about opioid addiction, and overdose, stating that more people die from opioid overdose than from car wrecks. He said current effort is being made to change laws related to opioids, to curb black market sales, addiction, and overdose, and to make overdose-reversing drugs more readily available to first responders.

Walden asked attendees if they had any questions, and the following were included in the conversations:

Rob Ellingson mentioned the Senator Wyden Town Hall, that was held in the Baker High School auditorium recently, during which the subject of the Owyhee Canyonlands designation came up. Ellingson said Wyden talked about working together

to come to a “win-win” solution, and a week later, Ellingson read that Wyden and Senator Merkley apparently planned to sponsor their own bill, related to the designation, which confused Ellingson. Walden said he and Bentz learned about the bill the same way Ellingson did, and that it’s a 2 million-acre mineral withdrawal legislation, but Walden strongly opposes any proposed support for the monument designation, including that bill. The bill includes other items, he said.

Steve Culley told Walden that sadly, his son committed suicide last year (he cited methamphetamine as the cause), and Culley spoke about the issues with obtaining treatment for drug addiction, and mental health issues. He offered to work with Walden, in order to formulate a better program for that access, and Walden thanked him, and expressed sorrow regarding his son’s death. Culley said longer term treatment programs for methamphetamine addiction are needed, because the current ones are two short, and ineffective, in many cases. Walden agreed, that treatment could take up to six, or even nine months, as opposed to 30 or 60 days. “It’s brain-destroying, family-ruining—it’s just awful,” he said, about the effects of meth, emphasizing the highly addictive nature of the drug.

Art Sappington mentioned reading about mineral withdrawal legislation in print media, stating that he thinks there is a conflict of equal standing, in relation to locatable minerals withdrawal, versus the leasable, and salable minerals, which he says the government is still maintaining access to. Walden wasn’t sure of the scope of the issue, but he said he and Jordan Noyes (who represents Walden’s Eastern Oregon District Office) will get to the bottom of it.

Sappington said he sees a double standard with the withdrawals, private versus public, and equal access and standing. Walden stressed the importance of access to minerals, and in preventing legislation aimed at barring that access.

Sappington also spoke about the lop-sided regulations, especially those

courtesy of the EPA. Walden said that it’s a frustrating process, with federal agencies’ lack of coordination with local government, and misplaced blame for the effects of exposure to mercury, for example.

Walden said, surprisingly to some attendees, the federal government is not required to replant on National Forest land after a fire, contrasted with the efforts of local government, and private landowners, to implement replanting as soon as possible. Walden said the federal government claims lack of funds for replanting (with basis for this claim), but he seeks to resolve that issue, with proposed legislation.

Lynn Shumway pointed out a major issue with the replanting currently—lack of seedlings. He said that, even with legislation in place, there’s not enough of a supply to replant at the moment, but there are efforts being made to remedy that, and facilitate replanting.

Shumway also mentioned another major concern, the lack of timber treatment in the South Fork (of the Burnt River) watershed area. He said the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) already knows what needs to be done to remedy that situation, but the process needs to move forward, which is another reason why certain legislation is critical.

Walden said he tries to educate legislators at the State and Federal levels, about the issues faced in eastern Oregon, with a major emphasis on how dry the climate and landscape can be, and the effects of wildfires, and mismanagement, including lack of thinning, on National Forest lands.

Curtis Martin voiced concern about the law under which the Hammonds of Harney County were convicted, for arson, which included a provision of expansive federal law punishing terrorism, resulting in years of prison time.

Walden said that he’s attempting to work on bipartisan legislation, which would allow exceptions for agricultural fires used as important tools for treatments, so that landowners could avoid being charged with crimes by the government, if the fires happen to spread from private land, onto federal land.

Fatality

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A preliminary investigation showed that the 2003 Buick sedan was traveling eastbound when it crossed the centerline and was struck on its passenger side by a 2011 Toyota sedan. Upon crashing, the front of the Buick caught on fire and was extinguished by first responders and people who had stopped to help using fire extinguishers, as well as a bucket and water from the ditch next to the road.

Medics arrived on scene and pronounced the female driver of the Buick, Christina Lynn Long, age 39, of Haines, deceased. The driver of the second vehicle, Tricia Eileen Price, age 40, of Haines, as well as her 17-year-old passenger, daughter Sydney Palmer, were both taken to St. Alphonsus Hospital in Baker City and then transferred by air ambulance to regional trauma centers for life threatening injuries.

Price was then transferred to OHSU with severe internal injuries, multiple lacerations and broken bones, and is expected to remain in that facility for at least two weeks.

Palmer underwent surgery to repair an artery in her leg as well as a broken arm, and is being observed due to a blow to the head that occurred in the accident. She was released from the Intensive Care Unit on Tuesday.

Just weeks ago, Palmer was one of two high school students who saved the life of a truck driver who had collapsed of a heart attack on Campbell Street in Baker City, making news across the county.

A witness stated that he saw the driver of the Buick make a bad pass on a corner on Highway 30 west of Haines.

He stated she passed a pickup on a corner and then quickly came to a stop in front of the pickup she had just passed at a high rate of speed.

The witness stated that as he entered Haines he saw the Buick catching up to him from behind at a high rate of speed. He was concerned that the driver was going to rear end him so he pulled over.

He stated he then pulled out behind it and was attempting to get a license plate to call in a driving complaint. He stated when he came to the next corner he saw the Buick suddenly swerve into the oncoming lane of travel and crash into the other vehicle.

Roadway evidence suggests that the 2003 Buick braked aggressively and initially traveled in a straight path within its lane of travel before veering sharply to the left into the oncoming lane as the vehicle rotated nearly 90 degrees counter clockwise where it was struck in the passenger side door the Toyota.

Highway 30 was closed in both directions for approximately four hours for the crash investigation. OSP was assisted by the Baker County Sheriff’s Office, Baker City Fire, ODOT, and Baker Rural Fire. More information will be released when it becomes available.

Debris flow

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

According to Lindquist, approximately .17” of rain within 15 minutes, .25” within half an hour, or .5” within an hour appear to be the “rain threshold” of the burn scar from the Cornet/Windy Ridge fires.

When Lindquist’s office sees a storm coming in with the potential to meet those thresholds, they notify Yencopal who will then send out information via traditional and social media sources, “Mainly to give situational awareness,” he said.

To individually notify residents in a potentially affected area of pending landslides and the like, Yencopal said the County will utilize the existing “mass notification” system in much the same way as what occurred during the fire season.

Level one evacuation means “be ready.” Level two means “be set,” which means a resident should be prepared to leave their home at a moment’s notice. Level three means “go now,” leave immediately. Those who ignore a level three alert should be aware that emergency services may not be able to reach them in order to assist further.

Those interested in being on the call list can sign up at baker911.org.

Stolen car recovered

On June 22, 2016 at about 7:30 am Baker City Police Officers received a report of a stolen vehicle being operated in Baker City. The reporting person stated they had GPS tracked the vehicle to Baker City. The vehicle, a 1998 Toyota 4 Runner with Washington plates was located near the intersection of Cherry and Campbell Streets by Officer Rand Weaver.

The vehicle was stopped by BCPD Officers in the 2400 block of East Street. BCPD Officers learned the vehicle had been stolen out of Nampa Idaho and subsequent to their investigation, arrested Connor James Patrick Sticka (02/16/1994), of Enterprise, Oregon.

Sticka was transported to the Baker County Jail and charged with Unlawful Use of a Stolen Vehicle and Possession of a Stolen Vehicle.

Subscribe today!
See page 9 for how.