

Opinion / 2016: A Year in Review

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Collaborative has stolen the voice of the people

To the Editor:
A 'quieter federal land battle unfolds' If you really look at what is unfolding, it's a battle for who speaks for local residents and how they use public resources. Mr. Webb, executive director for the Forest Service supported Blue Mountains Forest Partners (Collaborative) worked hard to disband the forest commission. A commission that friends of Mr. Webb's sat on for years, and never once questioned the legitimacy of the commission. Mr. Beverlin, supervisor for the Malheur National Forest, told forestry leaders that if road closures were opposed, no harvest would come off the forest, meaning "partners" of the "Collaborative" would not see their 70 million dollar "Stewardship Contract" come to pass.

So, what were Mr. Webb and Mr. Beverlin to do, could they sit back and watch "their" collaborative not be the sole "voice" on the Malheur National Forest, No. Could they sit back and watch people they supported for the commission lose in the primary and see their "influence" dwindle to nothing, as the forest commission could be used in Grant County directly "Coordinating" on projects in the county? No.

They were left with only course of action, disband the commission, steal the voice from the people of Grant County, and remove the last effective tool the people had to affect change on bad projects. This, doesn't not even mention Mr. Webb's growing influence and wage as the executive director of the collaborative, that is in direct conflict with the commission.

Were Forest Service "Collaboratives" formed to bring people together, or to control a message? Seems more to the latter anymore. Do what the collaborative says, and you can proceed, go against the collaborative, and they send in their executive director to kill public participation.

Nice model you have Mr. Webb and Beverlin, maybe you should take it nationally—oh wait, it already is.

John George
Bates

Marijuana opinions aren't facts

To the Editor:
In response to the letter submitted by Mr. Jerry Boyd (Friday, December 16, 2016) concerning marijuana I think some facts need to be pointed out that Mr. Boyd

seems to be unable to find references for due to concerns "for brevity". Perhaps I can help with the education of the "Reefer Madness" believers (but I doubt it). Some of the "information" Mr. Boyd presented (without references "for brevity") is hearsay or, at best, uneducated speculation. But some of the concerns Mr. Boyd brings up are, in fact, accurate, at least partially.

Mr. Boyd stated:
"1. In states that have "legalized" marijuana injury and fatal traffic crashes have increased significantly."

Actually, according to this report in the Washington Post traffic fatalities in Colorado are at near historic low levels. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/08/05/since-marijuana-legalization-highway-fatalities-in-colorado-are-at-near-historic-lows/>)

Also, referenced in that article was a study done by The University of Chicago Press Journals that states: "the first full year after coming in to effect legalization (of medical marijuana in 19 states) is associated with an 8 - 11 % decrease in traffic fatalities."

However, in a recent study at Washington State University (included in the same article) states "the percentage of drivers involved in fatal crashes who had traces of marijuana in their blood has doubled since marijuana was legalized. While the study can't prove that marijuana was a key cause of those crashes, it is likely that marijuana is at least one contributor to those fatal crashes. It's possible that police are simply testing for THC more often now that the drug has been legalized, and are therefore catching people who might have been missed in previous years."

In driving simulators people who are high are less likely to weave out of their lane and speed than drunk drivers, a 2015 study in The Journal Drug and Alcohol Dependence found.

According to this study done at Washington State University and reported about in USA Today: "What's more unexpected, the odds — adjusted for age and gender — of a driver with THC in his or her system crashing are only 5% higher than those of a sober driver." (<http://college.usatoday.com/2015/02/17/new-study-shows-no-link-between-marijuana-use-and-car-accidents/>)

I'll offer more facts in response to Mr. Boyd's letter about the "perils" of marijuana in a future edition.

Steve DeFord
Sumpter

Columbia Basin Helicopter wins new victory over County

On Thursday, February 25, 2016, Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Ronald J. Pahl issued an opinion in the matter of Baker County vs. David M. McCarty, aka Columbia Basin Helicopter, Inc., Case No. 11-653, stating that the defendant's attorney fees are reasonable, and that they should be granted.

Huntington hosts basketball tournament

The 53rd Annual Huntington Middle School Invitational Basketball Tournament was held on Friday, February 26th and Saturday, February 27th. The purpose of this tournament is to provide an excellent opportunity for athletic competition, social development and recreation for the children involved.

Geiser Grand to offer real ranch experiences

The Geiser Grand Hotel on Main Street has just finished expanding its previous "Real Adventures" packages, which have been offered to guests for quite

Museum mural project completed

Tom Novak's mural project was a labor of love four years in the making.

Originally planned to be completed in 11 months, but delayed by the artist's illness, the 18-mural series finally found its place along the exterior walls of the Baker Heritage Museum last Saturday.

Hughes arrested on meth charges

BCPD Detective Sharon Bass was able to observe what appeared to be a delivery of narcotics at a local residence and then Officer Rand Weaver conducted a traffic stop on the vehicle the suspect was traveling in, near the intersection of 5th and Myrtle. Arrested at the scene for Possession of a Controlled Substance Methamphetamine and Conspiracy to Deliver Methamphetamine was Tracy Leroy Hughes, age 50.

Rising police, fire needs focus of presentations

On Monday evening, about a dozen attendees including several City Council members, City Manager Mike Kee, and department heads, gathered in the City Hall Council Chambers to begin outlining Council goals for the coming year.

Rollover kills three

Oregon State Police (OSP) Troopers are continuing the investigation into this Monday morning's fatal crash on Interstate 84 westbound near Baker City, near milepost 306.

The child and an adult passenger, Wayne A. Owens, age 35, from Portland, suffered fatal injuries and were pronounced deceased at the scene.

ORP adopts Transfer of Public Lands Resolution

Baker County Republican Chair Suzan Ellis Jones and Baker County Republican Corresponding Secretary Carole Dyke traveled to Medford last weekend

March

some time.

Now, travelers to Baker City have a chance to visit local area ranches and experience firsthand what Baker County ag life is all about.

State dismisses ethics complaint

On February 26, 2016, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) ruled that they "did not find cause to proceed with an investigation" regarding an ethics complaint filed against former interim Baker County 911 Dispatch Center Director Jerry Boyd.

Baker County goes to Idaho Sportsman Show

Nonprofit and for profit-groups from all over Baker County showed up to encourage visitors at the Idaho Sportsman Show to plan their vacations in Eastern Oregon.

Cattlemen to fight Owyhee Monument

Between 30 and 40 people attended a special Baker County Livestock Association (BCLA) meeting at the Sunridge Inn Restaurant, on Wednesday,

March 9, 2016, including Representative Cliff Bentz, and Senator Ted Ferrioli via telephone, in support of a singular goal: to oppose the proposed 2.5 million acre Owyhee Canyonlands National Monument designation.

Johnston sentenced in tampon-flinging arrest

On March 9, 2016, a 12-person Baker County Circuit Court Jury convicted Marlene Frances Johnston of one count of Aggravated Harassment, a Class C Felony, with a vote of 11-1.

Republican banquet sees large turnout

The Baker County Republicans hosted their annual spring banquet last Saturday night at the Elks Lodge. As always, the event, which included a prime rib dinner, oral and silent auctions, and door prizes, filled the banquet room with around 150 in attendance.

BCPD hires new officer

Johnathan Stanley is starting as the Baker City Police Department's newest officer on April 20.

April



Kerry McQuisten/The Baker County Press

History in the making as Sara Blair becomes the Baker City Fire Department's first female lieutenant. L-R: Alan Blair, Sara Blair, David Blair and Fire Chief Mark John.

for the Oregon Republican Party's (ORP's) state meeting.

Man arraigned on sex abuse charges

On Tuesday, April 5, 2016, Antoine Mulder, born November 30, 1949, of 2306 Church Street in Baker City, was arraigned on a Grand Jury Secret Indictment alleging one count of Sexual Abuse in the First Degree, a Class B Felony.

Nichols to look at consolidating police and sheriff

At an April 1 meet and greet in Halfway for County Commissioners candidates, candidate and Baker City CPA Bruce Nichols was asked by a member of the audience to address rumors circulating that he would explore consolidating the Baker City Police Department and the Baker County Sheriff's Office should he be elected.

Nichols' answer regarding local law enforcement consolidation? A definite maybe.

SWAT robot fundraising begins

Last Saturday, Boyd demonstrated the Avatar III robot, which is the model the Northeast Oregon Regional SWAT team hopes to purchase—what they say is a vital piece of equipment that will add to the safety of their team members, victims and even crime suspects.

Standoff ends safely

On Tuesday, April 12, at approximately 5:33 p.m., Baker City Police Officers made contact with a male subject in Baker City's Mount Hope Cemetery, 1000 S. Bridge St. after a family member reported concerns the male was suicidal.

Candidates forum held

About 165 Baker County voters headed to the Sunridge to hear what Republican candidates for Baker County Commissioner Kody Justus, Jeff Nelson and Bruce Nichols had to say Tuesday night.

Patriots' Day celebrated

Patriots' Day was established on April 19, commemorating the Battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775, and this year it was celebrated in Baker County for the first time.

'Gold Rush' begins filming

The cast and crew of The Discovery Channel's mega-hit show "Gold Rush" are settled in Baker County, and according to one of the series' stars, Todd Hoffman, "It is unbelievable how welcoming the people around eastern Oregon have been."

Fire Dept. hires first ever female lieutenant

"In the long history of this fire department, this is really a very significant event," said Baker City Fire Chief Mark John.

ASH GROVE

Happy New Year
2017!

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