



The Baker County Press

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New year, new officials

• SWEARING-IN HELD AT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

BY TODD ARRIOLA
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Family and friends were in attendance as the Oath of Office was administered to five individuals at the Baker County Courthouse, on Friday, December 30, 2016: Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff, Baker County Commissioner Bruce Nichols, Baker County Sheriff

Travis Ash, Baker County Assessor Kerry Savage, and Baker County Surveyor Tom Hanley.

Baker County Circuit Court Judge Greg Baxter administered the Oath to Nichols, Ash, and Savage together in the morning, and later the same day to Shirtcliff (a State Oath was administered to Shirtcliff). Baker County Clerk Cindy Carpenter administered the Oath to Hanley that afternoon.

Shirtcliff, District Attorney since January 2001, was elected once again to that position.

Nichols, who won a close victory against candidate Kody Justus in May, was elected in November to serve for the first time as County Commissioner, replacing retiring Commissioner Tim Kerns, who now serves on the County Planning Commission.

Savage, in his position since January 2009, and Hanley, in his since January 1997, both ran unopposed during the May Primary, and they weren't required to be placed on the ballot in November. Ash, first appointed by County Commissioners

Bill Harvey and Mark Bennett, and former County Commissioner Tim Kerns to replace Mitch Southwick as the interim Sheriff in 2015, was elected to that position in November.

Shirtcliff, Nichols, Ash, Savage, and Hanley all began serving their four-year terms on Monday, January 2, 2017.

Want to contact your elected officials? A list of contact information is available in the gray box on Page 4 of every issue for your convenience.



Submitted Photo.

L-R: Bruce Nichols, Travis Ash, Kerry Savage.

Oregon's new SoS sworn in



Photos courtesy of Bill Currier.

Dennis Richardson, with wife Cathy, taking his oath of office in Salem on December 30.

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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Last Friday afternoon, Dennis Richardson was sworn in as Oregon's 26th Secretary of State. A Republican, Richardson campaigned often in Baker County, and visited last summer for Miners Jubilee.

His election to this office breaks a 30-year hold by Democrats on the position.

While Richardson's swearing-in was well attended by colleagues such as Congressman Greg Walden and State Rep. Greg Barreto, many of his young family members also attended, and his wife, Cathy, was at his side. Oregon Republican Party Chair Bill Currier described the event essentially as family-friendly and full of energy.

Richardson, age 67, is a Vietnam War veteran, pilot, and attorney with nine children and many more grandchildren.

The Secretary of State position is first in line for Governor, should that position be vacated for any reason mid-term.

Richardson ran against incumbent governor John Kitzhaber in 2014. That race ended in a narrow loss for Richardson, with Kitzhaber resigning only weeks later amidst scandal. Kate Brown was elected in November as Governor after filling in as an appointed official during Kitzhaber's remaining term.

The Secretary of State's office oversees numerous aspects of the voting process, business registrations and more.



Photos courtesy of Bill Currier.

Secretary of State Dennis Richardson with State Rep. Greg Barreto of Cove.

Theft reported at local mine

BY KERRY McQUISTEN
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Last Friday evening the Baker County Sheriff's Office received a report of a break-in and robbery at the mining claim up Clark's Creek in the Bridgeport area, owned by Marvin and Phillip Wirth and family. The claim has been featured on this season of "Gold Rush" on the Discovery Channel.

Marvin Wirth stated that marks on the chain on the gate were visible, likely from bolt cutters. Wirth said outbuildings had been gone through, and someone had attempted to start one of the loaders that had been parked nearby on the claim.

Neighbors up the road had seen a suspicious pickup truck on the remote road near the supposed time of the break-in. The next day, Wirth saw the same pickup and was able to get a plate number.

On Tuesday, Sheriff Travis Ash said that investigation into the truck cleared the suspect, and an investigation is pending regarding fuel believed to have been stolen during the break-in. Ash also confirmed that a lock had been cut to gain access to the property.

Counts caught

On December 28, Baker City Police responded to a report of a Burglary at 2289 Orchard Street where multiple firearms were stolen. Officers tracked the suspect to 2291 Orchard Street where they contacted Michael Counts in that residence, who was a person of interest in the case. A search warrant was obtained for 2291 Orchard Street and served the next day. Four of the five firearms were recovered at that time as well as multiple other stolen items.

On December 30 just before 9:25 p.m., Baker City Police were searching for Michael Counts who had a Baker County Parole and Probation detainer that had been issued for his arrest. Baker City Police were given information that Michael was attempting to secure a ride out of town, possibly headed to California. Michael was found walking alone on Broadway near 16th where he was taking into custody.

On that day he was charged with: Local Detainer (Parole Violation Baker County, Oregon), PCS Methamphetamine, False Info to Police Officer.

After a continued investigation, the fifth firearm was located. On January 2, Counts was also charged with: Burglary in the First Degree, Criminal Trespass in the First Degree, Aggravated Theft in the First Degree, Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine, Felon in Possession of a Firearm (four counts), and Criminal Mischief in the First Degree.

Friday Mostly sunny and frigid. Highs in the upper single digits. Friday Night: Mostly cloudy and cold, lows near -5.

Saturday Partly sunny with a chance for snow showers. High 18. Chance of precipitation is 30%. Saturday Night: Mostly cloudy with snow showers. Lows in the lower teens.

Sunday Mostly cloudy with snow. Late high near freezing. Chance of precipitation is 80%. Light to medium accumulations expected. Sunday Night: Mostly cloudy with a wintry mix expected.

Your weekend weather forecast for Baker County.

Our forecast made possible by this generous sponsor.

Official weather provider for The Baker County Press.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Sumpter ethics complaints wrap up	Page 3
Local attorney honored	Page 3
"So I was thinking..." by Jimmy Ingram	Page 4
County Commissioners coverage	Page 5
Special Olympics coach goes to Austria	Page 5
"The Outdoor Column" by Todd Arriola	Page 7

7 0148 74383 8