

Local

OSP honors local seamstress



Photo courtesy of OSP.

Judy Stultz (center, front) has been assisting the Oregon State Police's Baker City Troopers with uniform alterations for more than 20 years. Judy, a long time Baker City resident and seamstress, has been pretty much retired for several years, but continues to assist the troops. She invites them into her home and then delivers the finished uniforms back to the office. All of the Baker City troopers who have had the pleasure of working with Judy say she knows all of the OSP measurements and uniform requirements by heart and that she is just a wonderful lady. The OSP Baker City Office presented Judy with a plaque just to show how much she has been appreciated for these 20+ years.

Baker City Council: School levy on the horizon?

• TREE CITY USA AWARD RECEIVED, COUNCILORS ADOPT GOALS

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April's second City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Downing. Councilor Joseph led the Pledge of Alliance and invocation. City Recorder/Human Resource Manager Julie Smith called roll. All Councilors were present except for Councilor Nilsson. Council then voted unanimously to approve the consent agenda, which consisted of minutes from the April 11, 2017 meeting. Downing called next for Citizen participation. No one came forward. Council proceeded with the agenda.

Arbor Day Proclamation and 2017 Oregon Urban and Community Forestry Tree City of the Year Award

Downing read aloud a proclamation declaring the week of May 22, 2017, as the community's Arbor Day celebration. Baker City is celebrating its 32nd year as a Tree City USA city.

Members of the Tree Board Christine Howard, Lyle Kuchenbecker and George Wheaton were present as was Teresa Gustafson, arborist for the City of LaGrande and Board member for Oregon Community Trees (OCT).

In an address to Council she stated that OCT mission was to promote healthy urban community forests through leadership, education, awareness and advocacy by planting, managing and caring for our urban community forests.

Gustafson said, "To recognize the work that individuals and organizations are doing to sustain the trees in our community forests OCT and ODF (Oregon Department of Forestry) co-sponsor the Oregon Urban and Community Forestry Award program. The awards are designed to encourage better care of Oregon's community forests and to recognize the environmental, economic and social

benefits that urban trees provide."

Gustafson then presented the City with an Oregon Tree City of the year award.

She noted again that Baker City has been a Tree City for 32 years and stated that only five other cities in Oregon have been recognized for 32 years or more. Since becoming a Tree City USA in 1985, Baker City has also received four Tree City USA growth awards.

School District Long Range Facility Plan Presentation

Superintendent Mark Witty attended the meeting to give Council and update on the School District's Long-range Facility Plan.

He was accompanied by School Board Chairman Kevin Cassidy.

Witty began by stating that the last time any facility plan was put together was in 2006—a decade ago.

He noted a couple of big changes since that time, one being the safety and security of students and staff the other being technology.

Witty asked Council how many entrance and exit points they thought the High School had.

He heard answers like five, seven and 10.

"There are 19 entrance and exit points at the High School. So, when you have over 500 people within a facility you're trying to keep safe—" he said.

He stopped speaking for a moment trying to make a point, then continued, "There are different things that could be done through design, but back in 1950 who would have thought that would be something we would need to consider?"

The original building was built in 1950; however, a fire in 1989 destroyed much of the school, which was rebuilt in 1990.

Witty also explained the technology piece by saying many schools have added computers over time, mixing old and new technology that just doesn't meet today's needs.

Witty stated that throughout the state it was obvious there were two decidedly different groups. He said,

"The haves and the have nots."

The State of Oregon recognized there were differences around the State in K-12 facilities, and is encouraging communities take notice of this and come up with ways to address the issue, i.e. levies or bond measures.

Witty said, "The State of Oregon felt so strongly about it that they passed a law that the State had to put matching monies into a pot so that if a community passed a bond for \$4 million, they would qualify for \$4 million more from the State as a match. Just to give you an idea."

There is an \$8 million cap. Baker District would not qualify for \$8 million—the maximum allowable would be \$4 million due to size.

Witty explained that in November 2016 the District applied for and received a \$20,000 facilities assessment grant. The money was used to look at each facility and each system within each facility such as roofing, plumbing, technical, electrical and HVAC.

"Every system was looked at," he said. Witty gave a quick rundown of the facilities such as the Middle School built in 1934, South Baker Intermediate built in 1953, Brooklyn Primary built in 1955, Haines elementary Built in 1919 and the North Baker building that houses several different programs including Baker Web Academy built in 1913 with add-ons in 1955 and 1973.

These facilities are very old and quickly becoming overcrowded and difficult to use. The Baker School District operates on a general fund budget of around \$26 million.

Witty said, "Out of that we spend about \$2 million on infrastructure around a facility management—that's heating, electrical, any work we do to update things. Our staff, our grounds. About 8% of our budget is spent on facilities. In an older facility, it's not as efficient, so you're spending a higher percentage of your budget on upkeep like lights and heat." The State also encour-

aged communities to look at long-range facilities. A \$25,000 grant was made available with Baker 5J receiving that money as well. A committee was formed that is assessing each facility and giving recommendations for future improvements.

When asked about the possibility of integrating the High School and Middle School, as future projections show the Middle School becoming very over populated, Witty replied, "That is probably something the committee will consider."

Several Councilors questioned that as a strategy; however, Witty explained he had seen a similar situation while in John Day and it worked out well after a few minor bumps and a lot of initial supervision.

Witty also spoke about the way that Hermiston School District had added some very state-of-the-art sport facilities made possible by tapping into their own downtown business as sponsors.

A wide variety of tournaments are held there including some college sporting events. The City has seen a very large increase in revenue these facilities provide. Alternative fuels to heat buildings was also discussed, Witty was in favor of the idea; but advised it could be very expensive and therefore may not be a realistic direction to go—the idea would have to be evaluated by the committee.

Adoption of 2017-2018 Council Goals

City Manager Fred Warner, Jr. addressed Council by saying that the goals before them for adoption had no real changes from the goal-setting session that the Council participated in March.

He did note that the City had been contacted regarding the development of a youth center. Robin Nudd, Community Development Coordinator, advised Council that Rob Dennis had come to speak to her about a small group of citizens who were interested in considering ideas and options for such a center.

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Rental scam

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The money was wired to a location in Arlington, Texas to a man going by the name Desmond Michaels, who claimed to be the owner of Estabrook's property.

Newman said that the IP address on the Craigslist ad was "traced to a foreign country and it is attached to other scams."

That evidence places the case outside the jurisdiction of local police. Newman said in going back through past reports, no other like this had been reported locally.

Estabrooks said that in talking with her real estate agent in Baker City, the agency believed the scam had at least been attempted locally four or five times before to their knowledge, using homes and addresses listed on Zillow to create the false ads.

"Sadly, she got taken for a lot that she probably won't recover," said Estabrooks.

Newman said during this season to also be on the lookout for various tax scams, particularly via phone—and that he had even received such a call himself.

BCPD Chief now on OACP exec board



Photo courtesy of the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police.

This month Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner (far left in photo) was appointed to the Executive Board of the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police during their Spring Conference in Bend. The photo was taken at their Awards Banquet two Thursdays ago. Lohner takes the most entry-level position on the Board, that of Secretary/Treasurer, vacating his representation of the eastern Oregon region, which will now be filled with another area police chief. Lohner says positions on the Board last one year, and members rotate up through the ranks until they become 2nd Vice President, Vice President, President, then Past President, so acceptance on the Board is a multi-year commitment.

Compassion Center tractor found okay



Submitted Photo.

This temporarily missing tractor was found in good shape Tuesday.

On April 22, 2017, the Baker County Sheriff's Office responded to the area of Ebell Creek to investigate the theft of a 2005 Kioti tractor belonging to the Northeast Oregon Compassion Center. Compassion Center volunteers had been at the location cutting/gathering firewood for next season.

At the end of the day on Friday, April 21st, the volunteers secured the tractor and left for the day.

On April 22, 2017, the group returned to find the tractor was no longer at the location. A search of the area conducted by the volunteers did not turn up the tractor.

On April 25th, 2017, a deputy with the Baker County Sheriff's Office received a phone call stating the tractor had been located approximately three-quarters of a mile up the road, concealed behind a large slash pile.

The tractor was parked in such a manner that it would not be visible from the road.

Nothing about the tractor appeared suspicious as the piece of equipment was found to be parked as described at the time of the initial report.

The Sheriff's Office stated that volunteers weren't sure if the tractor had been moved/tampered with by an outside individual, or if a volunteer had moved it to a different slash pile. When the tractor was located, it was in good condition and secured the way it had been at the previous slash pile.

Anyone with additional information regarding the tractor is encouraged to call the Baker County Sheriff's Office at (541) 523-6415.