

Local

Sheriff to supervise call center

May, 2017

To the Community of Baker County,

Employees of the Baker County Consolidated Dispatch Center are requesting your support for the proposal being submitted by Baker County Sheriff Ash. The proposal incorporates the dispatch center under the management of the Sheriff's Office, with some redistribution of work duties to existing personnel. We feel that management under Sheriff Ash would provide us with a stable organized management structure and enable us to concentrate on providing the best service possible. It has been noted that we have had four different directors within just a few years and while each director brought something unique, the constant turnover erodes morale and prevents consistency in all aspects of the job.

We understand the difficulties of limited income and the work needed to balance a budget, but dispatchers provide a crucial service to all of our responders and the citizens of Baker County. It is a high stress, multi-faceted job, and many times we have to do it solo, work extra shifts, and be denied training opportunities. We are mandated a certain number of training hours to keep our certifications, and still we struggle to be allowed to attend trainings. Many dispatchers have applied and received scholarships, and some have personally paid for their own training. We know that Sheriff Ash is aware and understands our job, the skillset it requires, and the difficulties we face.

We ask you to use your influence to help put us in a better position to help our communities and the agencies we serve. Your support provides an avenue for us to progress forward and to help make positive impacts in our community. We urge you to consider what is best for the center and the resulting impact on the dispatchers.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amanda Bunch
Kaci Day
Garrett Smith
Karen Danner
Mandy Smith
Christina K. Smith
Nancy Appel
Michelle Taylor

Photos courtesy of the City of Baker City.

The above letter was presented during last Wednesday's meeting, signed by multiple Dispatchers.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Mayor Downing called the meeting that was held in City Hall's Council Chambers to order saying, "The main reason for our meeting tonight is a 911 consolidated dispatch discussion. We found it together with the County and need to get together all on the same page. We've had some discussions about continuing to run it the way it has been run with a Director under the direction of the County Commissioners.

"Sheriff Ash has also brought a proposal forward. I don't know of any others so I guess we'll start the discussion."

City Manager Fred Warner, Jr. stated, "Just for the Commissioners, last night we passed our budget (for the City) and I am assuming you passed your budget today?"

Commissioner Harvey nodded indicating they had.

Warner invited Sheriff Ash to speak advising that he had just gotten information that had been presented by Ash at a May 10th meeting to City Councilors.

Ash stepped forward to address Commissioners and Councilors, saying, "When I put this model together for operation of the Dispatch Center under the Sheriff's Office, I looked at the management style that I have with the other divisions such as the jail, parole and probation and the patrol division and the way I set it up the dispatch center would have employees that are sworn to the Sheriff just like all the other employees are sworn to the sheriff's office. The model would be set up the same as the other divisions as well.

"I have a Lieutenant that oversees corrections. I have a Lieutenant that oversees Parole and Probation and I have a Lieutenant that oversees patrol. With dispatch I would split that patrol Lieutenant to oversee both dispatch and patrol and of course I oversee it all and that would include dispatch as well.

"Some key points of this model: currently there is an advisory board, I would not have an advisory board. I will have a user group we can have Councilors, Commissioners, the Chief of Police, the Fire Chiefs, whomever.

"We would meet once a month and I have no

problem coming to talk to the City Councilors or Commissioners anytime. Transparency will be there, have no concerns with that."

Ash then addressed the budget. He said, "A couple of requirements I have with the budget, we have to have adequate staffing numbers."

In Ash's proposal, he provided a breakdown of how he intends to staff the center with eight dispatchers and bringing in a management assistant, eliminating the director position.

He said, "I take the responsibility of the Director and I take full responsibility for the center. I brought in a management assistant to help out, there are some contracts that need to be looked at with the State and with our repeater sites, negotiations with those sites. I am going to need some help with those things, there are just not enough hours in a day for me with overseeing the jail, patrol and parole and probation as well."

Ash explained that he had based his model on information provided by other area 911 centers that are also under local sheriff direction and how they are staffed based on a per capita population.

Ash said he used the funds from the Director position to offset the cost of the creation of the management assistant position and his plan also calls for promoting a first line dispatcher from within the 911 center to help run the day-to-day operations. Changes to the current staffing schedules offer savings as well in comp time earned and in overtime pay.

"Those savings will be around \$30,000 but you're not going to see that right away, it's not instant, that's over time."

Ash also noted that currently the records division in the Sheriff's Office is overwhelmed and with his creation of the management assistant position, assistance to the records division would be available.

Ash noted that he did not ask for a pay increase in this proposal for himself or any of his Lieutenants.

Councilor Abell asked Ash, "What do you see as one of the benefits to having this at the Sheriff's Office?"

Ash answered, "Well, you're going to get a supervisor on call 24/7, if I

am not available one of my Lieutenants will be 24/7 365 days a year."

Ash also advised Councilors and Commissioners that he had been told by Dispatchers, "We want you to step forward, we want this to come over to you."

A letter, signed by the majority of the 911 Center's dispatchers, confirming Ash's statement, had been distributed to Councilors prior to and Commissioners during the meeting.

With the County budget approving an additional \$65,000 to the 911 center Ash's proposal still lacks \$8,117 to function adequately.

Ash did note that there may still be savings that have not been uncovered but also that there may be unforeseen expenditures as well.

With both the City and the County's current budgets stretched to their absolute maximum, that additional \$8,117 seems unattainable however, Warner, Jr. did state that there was a contingency in the budget of \$4,162 that could be utilized bringing the shortfall to around just \$4,000.

Warner state, "We are going to have to figure out how to increase revenue or reduce expenses."

With the City's passing of the controversial Public Safety Fee to help with the shortfall in the City budget, no revenue increase ideas were proposed.

Ash also stated that in order for a transfer of oversight of the dispatch center, an IGA (intergovernmental agreement) was necessary so that should Ash have budget insufficiencies or Commissioners and Council decide the agreement is not working they all have the ability to come back to the table to discuss resolutions.

Commissioner Harvey stated that the budget that was approved just that morning allotted for eight dispatchers and a full-time director.

He said, "Travis is very admirable to try and be a director as well. The budget meets the needs of the Center. Our Board recommended the staffing so we as the County came up with \$65,000 extra to cover that."

Harvey stated that the approved budget meets the needed requirements to run the center at a cost that is less than Ash's proposal.

Harvey made clear, "The County can't come up with

any more money. We are tapped out."

Commissioner Nichols said most citizens he spoke with thought the Dispatch Center was already under the direction of the Sheriff.

He pointed out that due to budget concerns it would be difficult to "attract a full-time director, (the 911 Center's last Director Hope Lindsey left the center in May), ask them to move to Baker City and then find out that their position was being eliminated six months later because we don't have any money. I support Travis' position on this."

Commissioner Bennett, who negotiated the original consolidation of 911 20 years ago, stated he was familiar with the Center from its infancy to today. He has worked as a dispatcher, a dispatch director, county administrator and now a Commissioner.

Bennett advised was also in support of Ash's proposal citing the same hurdle as Nichols in attracting a new director. Sustainability of the Center was also noted as a concern and he felt the City and the County both needed to find ways to overcome budget obstacles to ensure the 911 Center functions at the level necessary for all citizens.

Bennett said, "We as governing bodies have not established a good solid funding mechanism."

According to Bennett he had "visited with dispatchers and the public safety community" and said that it was their feeling that "at this moment in time, this is the best option."

Bennett agreed with Ash that a management agreement was needed but felt that some type of advisory body was important for not only users but the community also.

He also said that it was important for the City and County to commit to working together so another such situation did not occur the next year.

Harvey again voiced his opposition to Ash's proposal stating, "In my opinion we need to look at a permanent fix. Having a director has been a historical process. You don't throw the managers out and just have the worker bees the only ones left. We will come together and find more permanent funding. This budget meets the needs, meets the requirements."

SEE CALL CENTER PAGE 9

Clear Creek Music Festival starts in Halfway

The seventh season of the Clear Creek Music Festival opens today in Halfway. Whatever music fills your playlist, something is sure to catch your ear. Beginning Saturday, July 8, local singers--adults, teens, and children--have chances to join the music making:

- Community/Festival Chorus for teens and adults: Ideal summer singing for Baker Community Chorus members. Perform favorite tunes and the world premiere of Blaise Ferrandino's "Crossing the Divide," travelling through Wyoming on the Oregon Trail. The chorus meets Saturdays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays June 8-21, 5:00-6:20 p.m., with performance June 21.

- "How to Sell a Song" for teens: tips on singing songs—folk to rap, jazz to classical—with vocal, musical, and dramatic techniques that grab the audience and make performing fun. The camp will meet Saturdays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays June 8-21 at 4:00 p.m..

- "Clear Creek Kids": fun, games, and singing Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays July 10-21, with a featured song in "Crossing the Divide." Sessions are at 3:00 or 4:00 p.m., depending on age with performance June 21.

The opening concert is Sunday, July 9 at 7:30 in the Pine Valley Presbyterian Church, preceded by a "meet the music and musicians" at 7:00. Festival piano, oboe, voice, and clarinet faculty perform familiar works by composers like Chopin salted with Samuel Barber and peppered with Bartok folk song arrangements.

Wednesday, July 12 at 7:30 p.m. students and faculty present Jammin' Jive, a casual concert of light music on the Halfway Main Street Stage.

Sunday, July 16 at 7:30 p.m. Festival students present arias, songs, oboe pieces, and piano solos in the Pine Valley Presbyterian Church. "Meet the music and musicians" begins at 7:00 p.m.

Friday, July 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the Pine Valley Presbyterian Church the closing concert features Festival students, faculty, and the children's and Community/Festival chorus. Student composers premiere work done during the Festival, pianists perform four-hand music, and everyone will be involved in the World Premiere of Blaise Ferrandino's "Crossing the Divide," the third part of Scenes from the Oregon Trail. This concert also is preceded at 7:00 by an opportunity to meet the performers and learn interesting things about the music to be performed.

Concerts are free and open to the public. Pay-what-you-can donations help defray Festival costs.

Information and registration forms are available at the Hell's Canyon Journal office in Halfway and online at www.clearcreekmusicfestival.org/community-activities/. E-mail your interest and bring the registration to the first session. Questions? Please contact Dr. Sheila Allen, Artistic Director at clearcreek@flash.net.

Routes closed for parades

On Saturday, July 15, 2017, the following highways in Baker City will be closed between the hours of 8 a.m. & 5 p.m. for the Miners Jubilee Parade: Broadway Street (US30) between 4th Street and 2nd Street; Main Street (OR7 / US30) between Madison Street and Valley Avenue.

On Saturday, August 5, 2017, the following highways in Baker City will be closed between the hours of 10 a.m. and 12 noon for the East West Shrine Parade: Broadway Street (US30) between 4th Street and Main Street; Main Street (OR7 / US30) between Campbell Street and Valley Avenue.

City has Board vacancies open

The City of Baker City currently has vacancies on the following boards/commissions:

- Planning Commission (1); Public Works Advisory Committee (2); Tree Board (3); Parks and Recreation Board (3); Golf Board (1); Airport Commission (2); Public Arts Commission (2); Sam O Swim Committee (2)

Volunteer forms can be obtained online at: <http://www.bakercity.com/FormCenter/Boards-Commissions-2/Volunteer-Form-33> or at City Hall, 1655 1st Street.

Labyrinth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

According to a card printed about the project, the labyrinth represents a journey to the center of our selves and back again out into the world. The area is intended to be a place of quiet contemplation.

Though the project only got off the ground last fall, the labyrinth should be completed within the next month and a half—before the influx of visitors anticipated for the August 21 total solar eclipse.

"The Baker City Labyrinth will be on a worldwide map of labyrinth locations that many tourists use in their travels," said Bonebrake.