

Local

County discusses foreclosures

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The Baker County Board of Commissioners held a work session on Wednesday, November 4, 2017, 9 a.m., which included a review of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, and a discussion and concerns regarding County foreclosure properties.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin. Attendance also included Baker County Administrative Services Director Christena Cook, Baker County Facilities Maintenance Foreman Dan McQuisten, Baker County District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff, Business Oregon CDBG Regional Project Manager Tawni Bean, Business Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority Program and Policy Coordinator Becky Baxter, Business Oregon Baker/Union/Wallowa counties Regional Development Officer Brian McDowell, and Chuck Rouse.

Harvey opened the session, and Bean, Baxter, and McDowell introduced themselves to those attending. McDowell said that Business Oregon recently underwent a restructuring, including a change in personnel, and the CDBG program.

McDowell said that, primarily, the trio met with the Board during this session, in order to answer any questions, and to address concerns, regarding the CDBG process.

Among proposed projects, Bennett mentioned the Richland-based Eagle Valley Fire Department public safety center, which would involve modifications of existing structure. Baxter said that the CDBG program is very restrictive, since it involves federal funding and requirements, and that any City or County government offices could not be located in a CDBG-funded facility. Baxter said that the CDBG program focuses on four main areas, with its funding: microenterprise, public works, community public facilities, and housing rehabilitation.

The higher priorities, the vulnerable populations (low to moderate income-



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L-R: Holly Kerns, Mark Bennett, Bill Harvey and Bruce Nichols.

based), include homeless shelters, food banks, and the Head Start program. In 2017, Baxter said, the state received \$11 million in funding for projects, but \$26 million in project applications were submitted for the CDBG program, a major shortfall.

Baxter and Bean discussed details of a PowerPoint handout, copies of which were provided to those attending, which covers requirements of the grant application process.

Among other details, Baxter said that there are incentive points awarded to an entity, depending on the stage in the application process, and what's already been completed.

This is a new program, and Bean said that this year, there is clarification as to how those points are awarded (included in another publication provided, the CDBG 2017 Amended Proposed Method of Distribution).

The second part of the session included a discussion with McQuisten, of County foreclosure properties, including the following: 2160 Wabash Street, Baker City; 301 2nd Street, Baker City; 2230 Campbell Street, Baker City; 2485 15th Street, Baker City; a 5,950 square foot lot, Sumpter; a bare lot with a barn, Sumpter; and a .17 acre lot, Durkee.

The Sumpter lot with a barn is Tax Lot No. 7500, Map No. 09S3729DC; the Sumpter lot is Tax Lot No. 3702, Map No.

09S3729DB; and the Durkee lot is Tax Lot No. 900, Map No. 11S4328BB. McQuisten discussed property assessment and sales with the Board, and Bennett asked how quickly auctions could be held, for the two Sumpter lots, and the Durkee lot. Martin said any proposed sales could be put before the Board at the Wednesday, December 6, 2017 regular session, but it would probably be Thursday, February 1, 2018, before any auctions could be held.

McQuisten said that (at the time of this writing), there were still tenants at 2230 Campbell Street, and 2150 Wabash Street, so, any eviction process, if applicable, will have to be completed, before the County can sell the property.

The bulk of the discussion centered the cleanup involved for the property at 301 2nd Street, first identified by the Baker City Police as an illegal drug lab site, in February 2015.

The City was unsuccessful in contacting the owner at the time, David Baggerly, and in October 2016, Portland-based A Best Environmental, an Oregon Health Authority licensed drug lab decontamination contractor, was contacted to perform methamphetamine contamination sampling on the property.

Larry Stone, of A Best Environmental, wrote in his report to City Police, "Levels in this house rank as one of the highest that

contractor has seen in our 15 years' experience..." In one of the bedrooms, the level detected was over 500 times the State threshold for cleanup requirements, and all samples were at least five times higher than the standard.

In October 2016, Stone wrote to Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner, "It's pretty much an economic decision on whether or not to demolish. Cleanup would be in the \$30,000 range, and I would recommend removal of all dry-wall. I see the estimated value of the property is \$72,000. Demolition of the house and outbuildings could be done by a local demolition contractor, provided that they do no ground work (only we could do that) and we would need to be on-site at all times that work was being performed, according to procedures of Oregon Health Authority. Estimated cost of that would be in the \$6,000 (range) including State fees, depending on how much debris would be left."

Cook and Bennett voiced some concerns about local personnel performing the cleanup, and Shirtcliff was asked whether there would be any associated criminal charges filed, to which he answered that he would look into the issue, and get back to the Board.

Harvey said that more research would need to be completed, regarding the former drug lab site.

No Shave November

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The rules of No-Shave November are pretty basic—all a person has to do is put down their scissors or razor for the entire month of November and donate those saved monthly hair-maintenance expenses to their cause.

By the end of the month, Lohner said some of his crew may start to look a bit like Santa Claus or old time Western gunslingers, but it's all about community service.

Lohner also said if members of the community would like to participate with them, albeit with a late start, match their funds raised, or simply donate, to please contact Phoebe Wachtel at the front desk of the BCPD, 1768 Auburn, or call 541.524.2010.

One injured in Dooley crash

Last Wednesday, November 1, the Baker County Sheriff's Office responded to a motor vehicle crash on Dooley Mountain near milepost 27, which closed the highway.

Sgt. Craig Rilee and Deputy Rich Kirby were on the scene. According to Sheriff Travis Ash, who was also on the scene, a request was made for Search and Rescue (SAR) to assist with Rope Rescue to move the patient up the hill back to the road.

Ash responded with five SAR membervolunteers. The responders on scene were able to get the patient to the road without SAR assistance. OSP was the primary investigating agency. Bowen Valley and Baker City Fire were on-scene as well.

The passenger, James Morehouse, of Vale, was driving a 2007 Ford two-door passenger car. Information was unavailable regarding injuries in time for print.

Surveillance leads to high risk stop

On November 2, 2017 at about 7:30 a.m. the Baker City Police Department (BCPD) began surveillance on a room at the Oregon Trail Motel, where a subject wanted on a Parole Board Warrant for a Parole Violation was believed to be staying.

This subject, Zachary Charles Persicke (06/15/1985), was considered a high risk threat as BCPD had reason to believe he was in possession of a firearm, had reportedly threatened to shoot it out with law enforcement, and had previously spent time in prison for the 2009 shooting of a Baker City man.

The information about Persicke's possible location was obtained by Sergeant Craig Riley and Deputy Rich Kirby of the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

At about 9:15 a.m. BCPD personnel observed Persicke walk out of Room #155 and get into the passenger side of a 2001 Ford Expedition. That vehicle left the parking lot and turned north onto Bridge Street and continued north on Resort Street.

BCPD Officer Chris Sells attempted to initiate a high risk traffic stop on the vehicle in the 1900 block of Resort Street, but the vehicle continued and turned east on Washington Avenue. With the knowledge that the vehicle was now travelling directly toward Brooklyn School, a BCPD undercover unit passed the Expedition, activated its emergency lighting and conducted a U-Turn to block the vehicle's progress.

The driver was called out of the vehicle and later identified as 31 year old Melissa Carey. When Carey got out of the vehicle she told Officer Sells that her young son was inside, whom she retrieved and brought back to Officer Sells patrol car. BCPD personnel were then able to extricate Persicke from the vehicle, who stated after he was contained that he should have had the officers kill him.

Persicke was found to be in possession of a 9mm handgun, a small quantity of Methamphetamine, a number of Morphine pills and other drug paraphernalia. Persicke has been charged with:

- Parole Violation Detainer (Parole Board Warrant)
- Felon in Possession of a Firearm
- Unlawful Possession of a Firearm (Concealed)
- Possession of a Controlled Substance (Methamphetamine)
- Possession of a Controlled Substance (Morphine)

Director's Nightmare to open this month

Director's Nightmare is slated to open at Eastern Oregon Regional Theater on November 16 through the 19th. 7 p.m. shows are Thursday through Saturday. Sunday shows are at 3 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for students and \$25 for a family. Tickets are available at the door, at Betty's Books and at Random Resales.

This one-act hysterical youth production is sponsored by St. Luke's Eastern Oregon Medical Associates.

Sage-grouse study focuses on raven predation

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He said, "ODFW, and USFWS are making the request for lethally removing ravens, starting as a study, so, we're not just indiscriminately going to go in there."

The questions will be, "Is this working? How can we make it work? Can they even drop the number of ravens? How is sagebrush influencing sage grouse? And then, if they lower the abundance of ravens, does that translate to a higher demographic rate of nest success, and maybe, chick survival, as well?" he said.

The data for the Baker pack will be compared to the data for Bully Creek,

and Crowley.

Dinkins said, "Basically, you try and remove things that are drawing ravens into the sagebrush, to see if you can get a similar response.

"That's more of like a long-term solution, so, if you lethally remove ravens, you have to keep doing it, because their abundance is high, because they have subsidies.

"So, if you lower their number, they're just going to rise back up again, because you haven't removed what's allowing them to increase."

He said that entities such as the Audubon Society and Oregon Wild have voiced their concerns with ODFW and USFWS, over

the lethal removal of ravens, stating that that's the only solution the agencies have looked at implementing.

Dinkins said that isn't true, and that the study involves collecting data on sage grouse demographic rates, and collaring sage grouse--the first "on-air" signal received in August.

At least 45 sage grouse have been radio-collared so far (with Very High Frequency, or VHF transmitters), with half of them in Baker, and the other half in Bully Creek.

No ravens have been collared at this point, said Dinkins, because it's difficult to do that outside of the January to February window, when ravens are

more restricted in what their food resources are, from a spacial standpoint. He said they'll be easier to find, where large groups are together.

Typical food resources for a raven includes landfills, where more were caught in the past, in Wyoming.

Where sage grouse have radio collars (these could also include Global Positioning System, or GPS units), which are lighter, and won't have negative consequences for the birds, ravens will have backpack VHF and GPS units.

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