

Baker City Fire Department Winning Team



Photo by Chris Galiszewski

The 12th Annual Baker County Fire Service Task Performance Exercise was held last Saturday. The winning team this year was Baker City Fire Department. Pictured from left is BJ Lynch, Tabitha Jensen and Brandon Hargous. Jason Jacobs was part of the team but is not pictured.

5J Kindergarten Assessment to be Held April 27-29

The Baker School District will be conducting individual assessments for children planning to enroll as kindergarten students in August, 2016. This screening is offered to assist parents and teachers in determining the readiness skills of preschool children for kindergarten entry in the fall. Children must be 5 years of age by Sept. 1, 2016, to be eligible.

The assessment covers three main areas of child development: motor skills, concepts and language. Children participate for about 45 minutes, one-on-one, with an adult in a variety of activities at four separate stations. Upon completion, the coordinator will share the results with parents and discuss any potential areas of concern or interest. Most children who are currently enrolled in a pre-school will be screened at their pre-school.

Children who are NOT enrolled in a pre-school will be screened at the Baker School District Office, 2090 Fourth Street, Baker City on April 27, 28 and 29 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Please contact Ellen Dentinger at 541-524-2260 to schedule an appointment, allowing 45 minutes to an hour to include consultation. During the assessment, parents will be asked to pre-register their child to assist the school district in planning for the next school year.

The child's birth certificate (or a copy) will be recorded at that time. Other pre-registration forms and information will also be available. Even if the child is unable to participate in the actual screening, it is important to complete the pre-registration portion at the District Office and have a copy of the birth certificate made. All students will, however, need to be officially registered in August with an updated immunization record.

Lease No Longer a Dollar

By Emily Braswell



Photo from www.bakeroregonhistory.org

Sumpter Valley Railway (SVRy) Depot building circa 1933. Note the smoke from the train behind the building.

Attorney for Baker County, Dan Van Thiel, was present at last week's Commission Work Session. He presented an overview of events of the past year related to the Sumpter Valley Railway (SVRy) Depot building. The building is owned by Baker County but sits on a portion of property on the north side of the railroad crossing at Broadway owned by Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). The County missed the deadline to renew the lease agreement.

The original land lease agreement between Baker County and UPRR was entered into June of 1995 in preparation for relocation and restoration of the SVRy Depot. The land lease allowed use of the building after it was complete, with the provision that a fence or barricade be built in specific locations on the property, for a rental price tag of \$1 per year. In order to renew the lease, Baker County was to advise UPRR in writing at least 90 days prior to the end of the initial 20-year term, which occurred June 1, 2015. UPRR did not receive any written requests for the land lease agreement renewal from Baker County.

Consequently, negotiations in creating a new land lease agreement, began after Van Thiel received the land lease files and notifications for lease termination in May of 2015. At one point in the negotiation process, the land lease had Baker County's rent at \$4,500 plus additional administrative charges. In the end, Van Thiel negotiated an automatic three-year renewal agreement to lease the property for \$3,000 per year, with an annual three percent increase, cumulative and compounded. The Commissioners can entertain lease negotiations again before the lease agreement is up again in December 2017.

Both the County and UPRR utilize the building and the Board ultimately agreed that it is not in any danger of being torn down or destroyed. Baker County especially stands to protect the historical integrity of the building there. This is in contrast to earlier statements made by Commissioner Harvey to multiple County staff members. A staff report by Dan McQuisten on March 3, 2016 outlined costs and responsibilities of the County should the Depot be torn down or abandoned. McQuisten also reminded Commissioners at that time about the significant investments made by members of the community for the restoration of the Depot.

Due to the historical nature of the building, its upkeep falls under the Baker County Parks and Recreation Department. Ed Elms, director of the Baker County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, said his board was not involved in negotiating or approving the new year-to-year land lease with UPRR.

Harvey replied, "I was not notified until the first of May that we were having problems with

the contract. At that time, Karen [Spencer] requested us to get involved because she was making no headway with their negotiators. It was past the point of options at that stage."

According to Commissioner Mark Bennett, the Depot building is in the process of being listed on the Historical Register.

Elms was also unaware of the need for the process of competitive bidding for contract services for the County. He spoke about his department's recent change of sanitation vendors, saying, "As a Director, I was confused in regards to that. We've had multiple vendors over the years and we've never had a contract with any of them, so why would we be required to have a contract now with someone to do our waste disposal?"

Harvey answered, "Because you have somebody interested in bidding. There's many people out there upset about this because of the process taken."

The Commissioners discussed the creation of a new procedure requiring all County departments to bring topics of interest to the larger community in front of the Board for discussion.

McCarty Attorney Fees

A court hearing was set for 1:15 p.m. last Friday for clarification of the judgement on the McCarty case. The 9 percent interest fee for a judgment raises concern to get correct information as soon as possible. The judge had granted reasonable attorney fees and signed the judgment. The County was sent a bill in the amount of approximately \$306,000 plus roughly an additional \$24,000. Last Friday's hearing should have given the Board clarification on that matter.

Tri-County Weed Board

Tri-county Weed Board's budgets are still not being made public. Baker County intends to participate with the Board, but would like to see the office moved back to Baker County where it originated and the budget needs to be transparent due to the pass through dollars from state and federal funds needing to be accounted for.

Possible Sale

Commissioner Harvey asked the Board for direction regarding the possible sale of 2.75 acres of industrial zone land owned. Baker County was approached by one of the manufacturing companies asking for the option to purchase that land. The property value from the assessor's office is set at \$42,000. Discussion among the Commissioners reiterated the original purpose of the land and pricing within the industrial park: to be a draw for industrial companies and create more jobs in the community.

Senior Meal Menu

April 22 - Baked Cod Cup/Clam Chowder, Baby Carrots, Coleslaw, Roll, Pudding: Entrée Sponsor Anne Bowling

April 25 - Hot Beef Sandwich, Potatoes & Gravy, Broccoli, Blend Veg, Carrot Raisin Salad, Ice Cream Entrée Sponsor Terri Everts

April 26 - Boneless Chicken Breast w/Cream Gravy, Rice Pilaf, Mixed Vegetable, Sauerkraut Salad Roll, Brownie Entrée Sponsor Settler's Park

April 27 - Baked Ham, Scalloped Potatoes, Peas & Carrots, Jello w/Fruit, Roll Birthday Cake** Entrée Sponsor Baker County Veteran Services

April 28 - Meatloaf, Potatoes & Gravy, Tomato, Green Beans, Broccoli Bacon Salad, Roll, Bread Pudding Entrée Sponsor Support Kody Justus for County Commissioner

April 29 - Chef Salad, Cup/Vegetable Soup, Cottage Cheese w/Fruit, Garlic Bread Sticks Entrée Sponsor Phyllis Galloway, IMO Harry Galloway

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