

SCHOOLS

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Witty also suggested that the Board and administrators attempt to discuss issues members of the public might have with how the school district operates that led them to vote against the bond measure.

“We need to review this as a team,” Witty said.

Board members also will begin discussion of their vision and goals for the District when they meet on Nov. 28. The District’s Leadership Team will begin considering the topics in a half-day session today, Witty said.

In other business Thursday, Betty Palmer, assistant superintendent, presented the District’s 2016-2017 (the most recent period for which data is available) annual English Language Learners Report.

The Department of Education is required to make the report to the Legislature each year.

Palmer explained that English language learners as defined in Oregon law are students who have a limited English language proficiency because English is not their native language or because they come from an environment where a language other than English is spoken.

The report measures current and former English language learners, those who have become proficient

Palmer said those former students are monitored for four years to ensure they retain their language skills.

Data are suppressed in any category with fewer than 6 students, she said. The Baker School District has a total of 33 students who are considered current and former English language learners.

The District receives funding based on the number of English language learners who come to the District.

“If we don’t have the students, we don’t receive the funding,” she said, adding that she fielded that question during discussions with the community about the proposed bond measure this fall. “We are appropriating the funding because we have those students.”

While 10 percent of all students in Oregon are considered English learners, fewer than 5 percent are in that category in the Baker School District.

Statewide, 15 percent of those students are considered mobile residents, with the Baker District seeing a 40-percent mobility rate. Palmer stated, however, that because of the small numbers, “just one family moving can make that big a difference.” She also noted that the statistics include Baker Web Academy students, who also have a high mobility rate.

While the percentage of students

who are not chronically absent statewide is 81 percent, Baker students routinely attend classes at a rate of 91 percent.

“Kids who are being served — they show up,” she said.

The Baker School District has become known for its innovative practices with English language students thanks in part to Ma’Lena Wirth, Palmer said.

Wirth is an interpreter and translator for the Baker School District who works with English language learners and their families.

Wirth meets weekly with 14 to 18 parents to help them learn English. English language learners who attend Baker High School also participate to help model the District’s literacy programs. The group gathers for a potluck dinner and learning, Palmer said.

Witty also informed the Board that the legislative Education Summit that visited Baker City last spring will make another visit to the District on Jan. 8.

“Timing is important because we are moving into a legislative session,” Witty told the directors. “There will be major topics, major issues, major movement — one way or another — in education.”

Among those issues will be consideration of a 180-day instructional year for students. Baker students attend classes 147 days, according to

the 2018-19 academic calendar.

There is disagreement at the legislative level about whether students need more flexible instruction time or if seat time should be the priority, Witty said.

School testing also will be an issue during the legislative session, he said.

While “hundreds of millions of dollars” have been spent on testing, Witty said “at the end of the day, I still don’t have quality trend data to look at. I don’t have good trend data because we switch (tests) every 36 months to five years.”

The state’s decision to allow students to opt out of testing for no reason and to notify them of that opportunity twice each year also has caused problems for districts, he said. That’s because of the federal government’s punitive ruling that after more than 5 percent opt out, the remaining students who don’t take the test are counted as if they had taken the test and failed it, Witty says.

The current Smarter Balanced Assessment is a better test, he acknowledged.

“But it’s unwieldy, not practical, too expensive and it takes too much time,” he said. “I think they’re going to pull a test committee together.”

Witty said he would be willing to serve on such a state-level committee.

BRIEFING

Holiday brunch planned

Baker City Christian Women and Stonecroft Ministries are sponsoring an inspirational holiday brunch on Saturday, Dec. 8, in Baker City.

The event will start at 10 a.m. at the Community Connection Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St. Cost is \$10, inclusive.

Guest speaker Kirsten Holmberg, a writer, speaker and public speaking coach from Eagle, Idaho, will offer a fresh perspective in her message, “Through the Trees: Finding Christ in Christmas.”

In addition, Baker High School’s Bel Canto choir under the direction of Hannah Violette, will perform holiday favorites.

Reservations are needed by Dec. 3. To reserve a space, call Jerri Wickert at 541-523-3447 or by email at jerrjohn2@gmail.com

Vector District board to meet

The board of directors for the Baker Valley Vector Control District will meet Monday, Nov. 19, at noon at the Sunridge Inn in Baker City.

RECYCLING

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Although the mixed paper bin will remain until Dec. 1, Baker Sanitary has actually been hauling that material to its landfill near Baker City for several months under an agreement with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

After Dec. 1, Baker Sanitary asks its customers to put mixed paper with the rest of their garbage.

The issue with China has prompted DEQ, since Sept. 1, 2017, to allow 26 companies to take materials, including mixed paper and plastics that had previously been recycled, to the landfill.

Oregon law allows the agency to do that when the cost to recycle materials exceeds the cost to dispose of them in landfills.

Of the 26 companies, 13, including Baker Sanitary, are still authorized.

Baker Sanitary’s agreement — it’s known as a con-

currence — covers only mixed paper and plastics.

But 11 other companies have concurrences that allow them to landfill rather than recycle materials of other types that customers place in curbside bins, what’s known as “commingled residential” recycling.

Baker Sanitary Service does not offer curbside recycling, so its materials are segregated by way of the bins at the recycling center. That allows the company to landfill only mixed paper and plastics, while continuing to recycle other materials such as newspapers, cardboard, aluminum and glass.

The 11 companies that can landfill other recyclable materials include Waste Pro, which operates in La Grande and Island City and disposes of its trash, including some previously recycled items, at the Baker Sanitary Service landfill.

Freese said China’s restrictions on recycling imports has affected the company because

the recyclable materials it collects have historically gone to China with two exceptions — cardboard and newspapers — both of which are trucked to Oregon companies.

In 2013 China imposed new regulations on imported recycling limiting contamination to 0.5 percent, but the country didn’t start strictly enforcing the threshold until 2018.

DEQ estimates that contamination of Oregon’s recyclable materials ranges from 8 percent to 13 percent.

The standards that China has set are impossible for Baker Sanitary to achieve, Freese said.

Contamination comes from non-recyclable materials being mixed with materials that can be recycled.

“Most people do a great job, but it doesn’t take a whole lot of contamination to ruin a product,” Freese said. “We just don’t have the facility or the manpower to do any sorting at all.”

China’s policy change has

caused a major disruption to recycling in Oregon and elsewhere, a situation that DEQ, in a recent information sheet, describes as “unprecedented.”

The effect has been akin to a chain reaction.

As the major recycling processors, which collect materials from Baker Sanitary and other garbage companies, have struggled to find markets, they have gradually reduced the volume of material they accept, or stopped taking some items altogether.

This has caused “a backup of materials throughout the collection and processing system,” according to DEQ. “Some communities — especially those in rural parts

of the state — have been disproportionately affected due to the added expense of transporting materials to processors in other parts of the state.”

That backup prompted DEQ to approve the concurrences allowing companies to landfill rather than recycle some materials.

As of Oct. 25, Baker Sanitary has landfilled 59.28 tons of mixed paper and plastic, according to DEQ.

Waste Pro has sent 28 tons of commingled recyclables to the Baker Sanitary landfill.

Freese said that continuing to recycle mixed paper would cost Baker Sanitary about \$2,600 per truckload.

“We just can’t financially continue to do it any longer,” he said.

Baker Sanitary will continue to accept cardboard, magazines, newsprint, aluminum, tin, glass containers and milk jugs at its recycling center.

“At this point I don’t see an issue with those products,” Freese said.

He said prices for those products have been lower than usual recently, however.

Baker Sanitary charges \$16 per month for weekly garbage collection. Waste Pro in La Grande charges \$24 for month. Trash is collected weekly, and recyclables every two weeks.



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SAINT ALPHONSUS FOUNDATION—BAKER CITY,
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO

FESTIVAL OF TREES 2018

Preview Among the Trees

Thursday, November 29, 2018
6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Tickets: \$15 per person
Hors d’oeuvres, No-host Bar,
Silent Auction

Gala

Friday, November 30, 2018
5:30 p.m.—11:00 p.m.
Cocktails 5:30 p.m.—Dinner 6:30 p.m.
Tickets: \$50 per person
Buffet, St. Down Dinner, No-host Bar,
Silent & Live Auction

Dance to live music of the “High Street Band” following the auction!

Tickets still available for “Preview” at Betty’s Books, The Sycamore Tree and Saint Alphonsus Medical Center—Baker City

Family Day

Saturday, December 1, 2018
10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
Admission: Canned food or unwrapped toy

Events are held at the Baker County Event Center
2600 East Street
Baker City, Oregon



Saint Alphonsus
FOUNDATION

The Baker City Police Department presents

3rd Annual Drug Prevention K9 Fundraiser

Demonstration • Dinner • Auction

Saturday, December 8th

Baker City Event Center



4:00PM: Social hour with a no-host bar courtesy of Barley Brown’s Brew Pub

5:00PM: Live demonstration featuring BCPD K9 Capa and K9 Handler, Sergeant Wayne Chastain

5:30PM: Prime Rib Dinner catered by Oregon Trail Restaurant

6:30PM: Live Auction



SAVE THE DATE

- Meet Capa & the BCPD Officers!
- Kids under 6 FREE
- Silent Auction & Raffle

Key Items include:

- 2000 Watt Honda Generator & STIHL Chainsaw
- Springfield XD 9MM
- Smith & Wesson .40 cal
- BBQ Gas Grill
- 14k Yellow Gold & Blue Topaz Dangle Earrings and Pendant

Tickets \$25 for adult, \$10 for kids 12-6 and kids under 6 are free!
Tickets available at: Baker City Police Department, Barley Brown’s Tap House & Thatcher’s Ace Hardware

All money raised will go to our local Drug Prevention K9 Fund to pay for Capa’s food, training, vet check-ups & much more.

This space proudly provided by Baker City Herald