

# Ontario's legalizing of pot shops could lure business from Huntington

By Casey Crowley  
ccrowley@bakercityherald.com

The decision by Ontario votes in the Nov. 6 election to allow marijuana dispensaries in the Snake River city could bring competition to Baker County's four shops, and in particular the two in Huntington.

Right now Huntington's stores are the closest to Idaho, where it's illegal to use, sell or possess marijuana whether for recreational or medicinal purposes.

Typically the ratio of Idaho license plates to Oregon in the parking lots at Huntington's dispensaries is at least 6 to 1.

Huntington is about 23 miles from Weiser, Idaho.

Ontario, by contrast, is just three miles from Fruitland, Idaho.

On Jan. 2, Ontario started taking applications from people who want to open a marijuana dispensary. As of Jan. 2 eight people have submitted permit applications for 12 sites, according to the Ontario Argus Observer newspaper. Stores could open in Ontario this spring.

Among those applicants is Steve Meland, a co-owner of Hotbox Farms, one of the two dispensaries in Huntington. Meland has applied for four dispensary sites in Ontario, and he said he's confident he will receive permits for those locations.

Although Meland does expect the opening of dispensaries in Ontario to cause a drastic decrease in sales in

## POT TAXES

Continued from Page 1A

The city tax revenue by itself is more than four times as much as Huntington collected from local property taxes, which is typically the largest source of general fund revenue for cities.

Huntington has collected about \$115,000 per year in property taxes over the past three fiscal years.

The city's new mayor, Richard Cummings, said the City Council doesn't have specific plans for how to spend the new tax revenues, but councilors will be discussing the issue soon.

He would like to see the city spend some of the money to repair streets, some of which aren't paved.

Other potential uses include building restrooms at the city park, digging a new municipal well and installing a new water tank, Cummings said.

The city has already been able to pay off tax bonds for city projects, as well as give raises to city employees.

Based on the 3-percent tax, marijuana businesses in Huntington generated about \$20 million in gross sales during the fiscal year.

Cummings said that although he didn't

support Oregon's legalization of recreational marijuana, as mayor he doesn't object to the pot-related businesses so long as they comply with state laws.

"They've been good as far as the revenue part, but along with that they have also brought a lot of traffic," Cummings said.

He said thefts in town have increased since the businesses opened, and he would like to see more of a police presence in Huntington. The city doesn't have its own police department but it contracts with the Baker County Sheriff's Office to have a local deputy.

Cummings had previously served on the Huntington City Council. Although he wasn't on the Nov. 6 ballot he was elected as mayor as a write-in candidate.

In Sumpter, population 210, the two marijuana shops, both of which opened in 2017, generated about \$50,000 in local taxes during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018.

That's more than twice the city's property tax revenue that year.

Unlike Huntington, Sumpter doesn't assess a yearly business license fee for marijuana businesses.

Sumpter used some of its new revenue last year to apply dust-abating oil on some of its streets, most of which are gravel.

*"We think that it is really important for us to continue to run and operate that store for the city of Huntington."*

— Steve Meland, co-owner, HotBox Farms marijuana dispensary in Huntington

Huntington, he intends to continue operating the store in Huntington.

"We think that it is really

important for us to continue to run and operate that store for the city of Huntington," said Meland, who owns the dispensary with Jeremy Breton.

They also recently opened two stores on the Oregon coast as well as a grow farm in Newport.

"We have definitely been under a pretty large expansion recently," Meland said.

He expects that many customers from Idaho will

patronize the new Ontario stores because of their proximity.

However, Meland said his Huntington store also attracts many customers from Baker County and elsewhere in Oregon who live closer to Huntington than to Ontario.

Meland thinks the Huntington stores could appeal to those who prefer privacy and shorter lines, as he expects the Ontario locations will be busier.

## FURLOUGH

Continued from Page 2A

So while they are required to work, without compensation, unemployment laws preclude them from collecting unemployment benefits.

In past shutdowns Congress has subsequently authorized back pay, and most political observers expect that will happen again.

If it does, those workers who received jobless benefits — but later got back

pay — are nominally obliged to return the "overpayment" from their jobless benefits.

Gerstenfeld said they don't really have to.

The law doesn't allow the state's unemployment division to demand the money, he said, or to send a collections agency after you if you don't pay it back.

If you need unemployment benefits in the next five years, though, the division can withhold those benefits until it has re-

couped what it is owed from the shutdown.

"It is an overpayment," Gerstenfeld said, "but the only way that we are permitted to pursue recovery is through that benefit offset."

More information is available from the state online.

The state has about 28,000 federal employees altogether, according to the Oregon Department of Labor, two-thirds of whom work for funded agencies not directly affected by

the shutdown — the U.S. Postal Service, Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor.

That leaves the 9,600 who have either been furloughed, have funding to continue working a little longer, or who are working but not being paid. Those include nearly 3,000 Forest Service workers and more than 1,300 with the Bureau of Land Management.

# Idaho man dies in crash near Ontario

A Meridian, Idaho, man died Tuesday evening after he lost control of his vehicle and crashed on Interstate 84 near Ontario.

Kevin Luby, 42, was driving westbound in a Toyota 4Runner near Milepost 367, about eight miles west of Ontario, about 5:18 p.m. Tuesday when his ve-

hicle drifted off the roadway into the median, rolled and crossed the eastbound lanes before stopping.

No other vehicles were involved.

Luby was not wearing a seatbelt, according to Oregon State Police.

Police believe texting might have contributed to the crash.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Baker County Democrats meet Jan. 17

The Baker County Democrats will have their monthly meeting on Thursday, Jan. 17 at the Rogers Fellowship Hall, corner of Fourth Street and Washington Avenue, west of the Courthouse.

Coffee, tea and hot cocoa will be ready at 5:30 p.m., with the meeting starting at 6 p.m. They will be discussing upcoming fundraising events, and open seats in the May election.

### City planners set work session Jan. 16

The Baker City Planning Commission will have a work session Wednesday, Jan. 16 at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St.

Planners will review materials for proposed updates to the city's development code, including revisions to site design review. Copies of the work session documents are available in the Baker City/County Planning Department at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St.; digital versions can be emailed for free by calling Eva Henes at 541-523-8219 or email to ehenes@bakercounty.org

— From staff reports and press releases

## COUNCIL

Continued from Page 1A

In January 2007 the City Council also used secret ballots to elect Jeff Petry as mayor.

The interim city manager at that time, David Fine, later admitted he had misread the Public Meetings Law.

Because Fine had torn up the paper ballots on which councilors voted, there was no official record of the mayoral election.

The Council voted again at its next meeting, and again elected Petry.

As for the discrepancy in the vote totals, Smith said she initially tallied the wrong ballot from Andersen.

Each councilor was given two ballots. One had both the mayor and acting mayor positions, and the other ballot had only the acting mayor.

Andersen inadvertently handed Smith both of his ballots, though councilors were only voting for mayor. She misread the ballot that included only acting mayor and mistakenly counted Andersen's mayoral vote for Downing. On the other ballot Andersen had voted for Joseph for mayor.

The Council didn't use ballots to choose acting mayor because Downing was the only candidate.

Councilors raised their hands to indicate their unanimous selection of Downing as acting mayor.

# Former State Police spokesman admits harming estranged wife

## ■ Capt. William Fugate sentenced to 2 days in jail, probation

By Garrett Andrews  
WesCom News Service

Oregon State Police captain and former spokesman William Arthur Fugate was sentenced Tuesday to two days in jail for harassment after pleading guilty to violently grabbing his estranged wife in 2017.

At an emotional hearing in Deschutes County Circuit Court, Fugate accepted responsibility for causing injury to Georgina Monrean-Fugate, his onetime high school sweetheart who grew terrified of him over two decades of marriage.

Fugate, 43, agreed to the brief jail term, plus two years probation and attendance in a batterers intervention class.

Once the face of OSP, Fugate remains under internal investigation and on unpaid leave.

Fugate's case came to Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel's office under "chilling" circumstances, Hummel said Tuesday. Several years ago, Monrean-Fugate had become so afraid of her husband that she and a friend developed a safety word to use if Monrean-Fugate feared imminent harm, Hummel said. One day last year, the friends were talking on the phone when the call was abruptly disconnected. The friend texted the safety word; Monrean-Fugate replied but did not indicate

she was all right, Hummel said. The friend called police.

"(Monrean-Fugate) was initially reluctant to share any information," Hummel said. "But then she related an account that described 10 years of abuse."

Particularly chilling, Hummel said, was a letter Monrean-Fugate gave the same friend several years earlier. It came in a sealed envelope with a note saying not to read unless Monrean-Fugate died.

During the investigation, the friend told authorities about the letter. They asked Monrean-Fugate if they could read it. She agreed, Hummel said, and what police found shocked them.

"She had written an account of all the abuse she had suffered," Hummel said. "She was afraid that if her husband killed her he would make it seem accidental or like someone else did it, and she wanted that account to survive her death."

Hummel said investigators uncovered seven total instances of domestic violence, five of which were barred from prosecution because of Oregon's statute of limitations.

According to Monrean-Fugate, who spoke in court Tuesday, she and her husband were high school sweethearts and their first years of marriage were happy. They

married in 1997 and have two children, 15 and 19. Their 15-year-old daughter also gave a statement at Fugate's sentencing, asking him to get help.

In January, the couple filed for divorce. The same day, Monrean-Fugate filed a restraining order, stating she feared for her safety.

In February, Hummel announced Fugate was under investigation for crimes related to domestic violence. OSP placed him on paid leave.

In late June, Fugate was indicted on two counts of misdemeanor harassment,

at which point he was moved to unpaid administrative leave, which is OSP policy when an employee faces criminal charges, according to agency spokesman Capt. Tim Fox.

Tuesday, Fugate pleaded guilty to one count of harassment, for an incident on June 15, 2017, during a verbal argument in the couple's Redmond home. Fugate "violently" grabbed his estranged wife's arm to get her attention, according to Hummel, who took the rare step of personally prosecuting this case.

Monrean-Fugate photographed the bruises her husband had caused.

"That photo was a critical

piece of evidence," Hummel said.

Fugate came to OSP 11 years ago after working for the Vancouver Police Department. When he was placed on leave, he was earning between \$9,900 and \$10,900 per month.

His attorney, Stephen Houze, told The Bulletin his client's actions were motivated in part by post-traumatic stress disorder caused by many years in law enforcement and the military.

"One of the things that's so sinister about this condition is that it's so hard for these guys to see it happening," he said. "These are ordinary people asked to do extraordinary things. And it

takes its toll."

Fugate and Monrean-Fugate are still in the process of dissolving their marriage.

"He feels horrible about what happened," Houze said. "In time, he hopes to resurrect a relationship with his kids. He loves them very much and he very much wants to be their dad."

January 11-17

ELTRYM HISTORIC THEATER

1809 1st St, Baker City • www.eltrym.com

**REPLICAS** PG-13  
A scientist becomes obsessed with bringing back his family members who died in a traffic accident.  
FRI & SAT (4:10) 7:10, 9:45  
SUN: (4:10) 7:10 MON-THURS: 7:10

**THE MULE** R  
Clint Eastwood, Bradley Cooper. A 90-year-old veteran is caught transporting cocaine through Illinois.  
FRI & SAT (4:00) 7:00, 9:40  
SUN: (4:00) 7:00 MON-THURS: 7:00

**AQUAMAN** PG-13  
Jason Momoa, Arthur Curry learns that he is the heir to the underwater kingdom of Atlantis.  
FRI & SAT (3:45) 6:45, 9:35  
SUN: (3:45) 6:45 MON-THURS: 6:45

1 | Bargain Matinee  
Show Times: 541-523-2522  
Office: 541-523-5439

Mobile Service  
Outstanding  
Computer Repair

Any issue \$40 flat rate  
Call or Text 24/7  
Dale Bogardus 541-297-5831

Let's upgrade your computer to make it faster!

www.outstandingcomputerrepair.com  
Refurbished Desktop & Laptops For Sale  
House calls (let me come to you!)  
Drop Offs & Remote Services are Available  
Office Hours 7am-7pm • Monday-Saturday  
All credit cards accepted

Tires LES SCHWAB

WINTERCAT SST

225/75R-16

\$139.90

Studdable Winter SUV  
Increased Stability  
Advanced Winter Traction

WE GLADLY MAKE APPOINTMENTS

LEW BROS.  
210 Bridge Street  
541-523-3679  
AFTER HOURS:  
541-518-7100