

# Community

## COACH

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"The policy says all concerned parties will be invited to meet and discuss the complaint," Carter said.

He does not believe that was done. Of the more than 30 athletes who could have spoken about the issue, only a few came forward to speak during the investigation of the complaints, Carter said.

It was his understanding that Wilson was dismissed because he was considered "a liability" to the District.

"I conclude he was dismissed as a liability due to sexual harassment," Carter said. "And there is inconclusive evidence to conclude that sexual harassment had occurred."

"Sexual harassment of student athletes is a serious allegation that will follow him for the rest of his life," Carter said. "This was not fair and it doesn't even seem legal."

The complaints that prompted the school district's investigation weren't the first against Wilson.

The Oregon Teachers Standards and Practices Commission investigated similar complaints against Wilson in August 2015 related to his role as girls junior varsity basketball coach in 2014.

The Commission, in a finding dated Nov. 9, 2017, found that Wilson "exhibited a pattern of behaviors that made student athletes feel uncomfortable." As a result Wilson's teaching license was suspended for 60 days and he was placed on two years' probation, which will expire in November 2019. He also was ordered to complete training related to student/teacher boundaries within the first year of probation.

The finding is available online at [www.tspc.state.or.us/temp\\_images/T00077729PR01906784.pdf](http://www.tspc.state.or.us/temp_images/T00077729PR01906784.pdf)

The Board first met Tuesday in an executive (closed

*"Not once have I ever felt uncomfortable in his presence. He has helped us so much in our volleyball and in our personal lives."*

— **Averi Elms, Baker High School student, talking about her former volleyball coach, Warren Wilson**

to the public) session before moving to open session to take action.

About 25 people, including members of Wilson's BHS volleyball team, attended the open meeting at which the board voted unanimously to uphold Wilson's termination.

Wilson, who was in the audience, declined to comment after the meeting.

In addition to Carter, two others spoke in Wilson's defense: Averi Elms, a BHS junior who has played volleyball for Wilson for three years; and Molly Smith, principal at North Powder Charter School where Wilson is the head boys basketball coach. Smith also is the wife of BHS athletic director Tim Smith, who is head baseball coach at BHS.

Molly Smith told the Board that she has known Wilson since she was in high school and that his background is "impeccable."

He retired from a 33-year teaching career for the Wallowa School District in 2004 and also served as the district's activities director and athletic director. During his tenure there he coached high school baseball, boys and girls basketball and volleyball as well as junior high sports.

Smith was critical of how the District handled the complaints against Wilson.

She maintained that Wilson's contract for baseball season, which had been signed in August, should not have been terminated after the season had started.

Baseball season got underway Feb. 11 and those coaching pitchers and catchers can

start two weeks earlier than that, she said.

"His reputation has been damaged as a result of the school board not following its own policies," Smith said. "You can see the support here and this is without baseball and the other athletes."

The boys baseball team was out of town for a game at Nyssa Tuesday. Otherwise, Smith assured the Board, her son, Spencer, and his teammates would have attended the meeting to show support for Wilson.

Averi Elms told the Board that she has known Wilson since he moved to Baker City.

"Not once have I ever felt uncomfortable in his presence," she said. "He has helped us so much in our volleyball and in our personal lives."

She asked the Board not to be influenced by a few players who are dissatisfied with the coach.

"Don't let players who don't agree with their playing time come in and tear our volleyball family apart," she said.

Before taking action, Board Chairman Chris Hawkins, thanked those who attended Tuesday's meeting as well as those who came forward with complaints about Wilson, allowing the Board to receive and review all pertinent information before making a decision.

The Board agreed in the open meeting to seek an audit of how District policies are followed when complaints are made.

Hawkins said he was concerned about why it was necessary for the complaints to be brought to the Board rather than being resolved at a lower level.

"How we got to this point in the first place is a little concerning to me," Hawkins said.

He said the audit would look at how the district conducts hiring and background checks as well as

other policies regarding public complaints and sexual harassment.

"And I would say not just for this instance, but district-wide," he said.

Director Julie Huntington added that auditing how district policies are used would help improve safety throughout the district.

"Our policies protect our students, protect our staff and protects our administration," she said.

The Board authorized Hawkins to work with the Oregon School Boards Association to schedule the policy audit.

## Teachers Standards and Practices Commission

The TSPC, which investigates allegations made against licensed teachers in Oregon, found as a result of the 2015 investigation that Wilson's interaction with girls on his team was inappropriate.

According to the stipulation of facts and final order from November 2017: "Wilson's behaviors included the following: sitting too close, placing his arm around students, touching their hair, lower backs and earlobes, speaking to them about personal issues, and massaging and stretching students in isolation."

According to the TSPC report, Baker School district "officials described Wilson's conduct as 'misguided attempts to positively reinforce and/or to build positive relationships with athletes.'"

The Commission's report went on to say that the officials "recognized that Wilson's conduct also resembles grooming behaviors and could be considered harassment in violation of district policies."

The report concluded that Wilson's actions constituted "gross neglect of duty" in violation of state law.

Wilson agreed to those facts in a document he signed on Sept. 23, 2017.

## LOCAL BRIEFING

### Ladies Golf and Bridge luncheon April 3

The Baker Ladies Golf and Bridge association will have its season-opening luncheon on Wednesday, April 3 at Quail Ridge Golf Course. Weather permitting, golf will start at 8:30 a.m., with lunch at 12:30 p.m. following by bridge. Cost is \$9 for lunch and a one-time charge of \$5 for the membership fee and \$1 for social club fee.

To reserve a place for lunch, call Diane Ellingson at 541-523-4553 or 541-519-4703 by Tuesday, April 2.

### Filing deadline nears for May election

Directors will be elected May 21 to serve on special boards to represent districts ranging from those that oversee schools, water control, fire protection and other functions of communities throughout the county.

Thursday, March 21, is the deadline for candidates to file for those positions.

As of this morning only incumbent directors had filed for four-year terms to serve on the Baker School Board. Chris Hawkins, current board chair, has filed to serve a second four-year term in Position 1.

Andrew Bryan, who originally was appointed to fill an unexpired term in 2010, has filed for a third four-year term in Position 2. And Julie Huntington, who was appointed to the Board in January 2018 to fill an unexpired term, has filed to serve a four-year term in Position 5.

The deadline for filing for office is 5 p.m. Thursday at the County Clerk's Office in the Courthouse at 1995 Third St.

Candidates must file a declaration of candidacy or a petition for nomination for office with the County Clerk's Office in time for the petition to be certified by 5 p.m. Thursday, said County Clerk Stephanie Kirby.

### Soroptimists offering scholarships, grant

Soroptimist International of Baker County is offering a \$2,000 award to a woman-owned or -led company in Baker County, as well as two \$1,000 scholarships to female students graduating this year, or within the past five years, from a Baker County high school or Powder Valley High School.

The InnovateHer \$2,000 grant is intended to foster economic development. The recipient can use the money for any costs associated with expanding or updating a business. The deadline to apply is April 30.

The \$1,000 scholarships are available to female students who are attending or have been accepted for higher education. Application deadline is April 15.

For applications or other information about either program, email Kelly Tanzey at [kelly\\_t@live.com](mailto:kelly_t@live.com)

### Baker County Democrats meet Thursday

The Baker County Democrats will have their monthly meeting on Thursday, March 21, at Rogers Fellowship Hall, 1995 Fourth St. Refreshments will be available at social time, 5:30 p.m., with the meeting at 6 p.m. All are welcome.

### County seeking volunteers

Baker County is seeking volunteers to serve on its Planning Commission and on the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District.

Volunteer forms are at [www.bakercounty.org/](http://www.bakercounty.org/) commissioners. More information is available by calling the Commission Office at 541-523-8200 or emailing [hmartin@bakercounty.org](mailto:hmartin@bakercounty.org)

### City planners to meet Wednesday

The Baker City Planning Commission will meet March 20 at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St.

Planners will have a public hearing on a proposal to add 17,168 square feet to the Harvest Church at 3720 Birch St.

Copies of the Harvest Church application are available at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St., and digital versions can be emailed by contacting the planning department at [planning@bakercounty.org](mailto:planning@bakercounty.org) or 541-523-8219.

— Compiled from staff reports and press releases

## FORESTS

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About 100 people attended an "objection resolution" meeting in Baker City in late November, one of several the Forest Service scheduled around the region.

Harvey was among those who spoke during the meeting, saying "the whole plan is disastrous for us."

Other speakers said the proposed plans didn't call for enough logging to reduce the risk of wildfire, among other issues.

The three national forests will continue to be managed under their existing plans, which date to 1990 but have been amended multiple times since.

Harvey said that's a better outcome than having the proposed new plans take effect.

He thinks the Forest

Service failed to use the 1990 plan as a baseline for the new plan.

"You have a plan, you should always take what you have and just modify it, you don't need to throw it out and start over and that was their biggest problem to begin with," Harvey said.

Karen Coulter concurs with Harvey in that respect, although her concerns about the withdrawn plans are based on quite different issues.

Coulter is the director of the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, which is based in Fossil.

She's pleased that the forest plans were withdrawn, not because they proposed too little logging, but rather too much.

"From our point of view, there was not enough ecological protection," Coulter said.

She contends the proposed plans would have weakened existing protection for streams, and regulations on livestock grazing.

Coulter also thinks the Forest Service failed to address the effects of climate change on the forests.

Neither Harvey nor Coulter supports continuing indefinitely with the 1990 forest plans.

"We got a lot of work to do for the next 15 years and I'm optimistic about the out-

come," Harvey said. "We will sit down together with the Forest Service and BLM and start picking a solid direction that is based on working together."

Coulter said the Forest Service needs to adopt new forest plans eventually.

"It's not like we're satisfied with the status quo, but the revised forest plans were even worse," she said.

— *Jayson Jacoby contributed to this story.*

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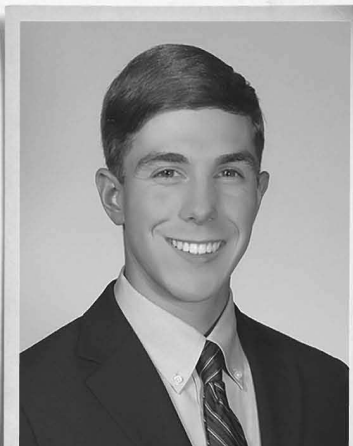
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Frontier Farm Credit is proud to award Morgan Scilacci of Baker City, Oregon, a \$2,500 academic scholarship. Morgan attends Kansas State University where he majors in Animal Sciences and Industry.

Morgan is the son of Kirk and Michelle Scilacci.

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