

INTERSECTION OF MAIN AND D STREETS WILL BE CLOSED

Storm drain project affects traffic

Drivers who frequently use the intersection of D and Main streets in Baker City, just west of the Powder River, will need to find an alternate route starting today as the city's Public Works Department begins a \$37,000 project to enlarge the stormwater lines in that area. The project is part of the capital improvement plan that the City Council approved.

City workers will replace 15-inch-

diameter lines under First Street with 21-inch pipe. The existing 15-inch line under D Street will be replaced with 21-inch pipe in some places and 24-inch pipe in others.

The area is a "bottleneck" in the storm drainage system, and during heavy rain the undersized pipes can fill and cause water to back up blocks away, said Joyce Bornstedt, the city's technical administrative supervisor.

Starting today Main Street will be closed from C Street to D Street, and D Street will be closed from Walnut Street to First Street. The intersection at D and Main should reopen near the end of the first week of the project.

Drivers should expect traffic delays and possible detours.

More information is available by calling Public Works at 541-524-2047 or 541-524-2046.



SINGERS

Continued from Page 1A

"We used to have ... somebody would come in from the military and carry the flag in, and representatives from the different branches of the military would carry the flag in," Sharon McKim said.

Yeoumans recalled when the Choir asked people in the community to share pictures of anyone in their family who was or had been in the military.

The Choir converted the pictures into slides that were shown on the wall of the Baker High School auditorium during their performance around 15 years ago.

"That was really special," Yeoumans said.

"One of my favorites was, we did 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic,' the long version, and it came out pretty good," Bob McKim said.

The Community Choir is looking for new members and welcomes anyone who enjoys singing. The group will announce when it begins practice for the Christmas performance in September.

Choir rehearsals take place at the Presbyterian Church on Mondays. For any questions or information, people can contact one of the choir members.

S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

LaVonne Yeoumans chats about her 38 years as a member of the Baker Community Choir as her great-grandson, Emmett Young, listens patiently.

GARBAGE

Continued from Page 1A

The letter-signers, who are members of or supporters of the group Baker City Trash Talk, wrote that they believe "it is reasonable for (Baker Sanitary) to request a rate increase after twelve years with no rate adjustments."

The signatories are asking the Council, and Baker Sanitary, to consider several steps designed to reduce the amount of material going to the landfill and thus increasing its lifespan.

- Expanding recycling options at Baker Sanitary's collection center at 12th and Campbell streets to include office pack and #1 PETE plastics.

- Establish a waste management education and outreach program.

"Residents need clear information and accurate instruction in order to reduce their waste, recycle while avoiding contamination, learn to compost and process green waste correctly, and become thoughtful and waste-reducing consumers," the letter reads.

- Develop a composting/green waste program for residents and businesses

"Many residents can compost at home if they have the necessary information and tools," the letter reads.

- Research curbside recycling options

Henry addresses these topics in his letter to the Council.

In terms of recycling, he wrote that "we will continue to pursue all attainable recycling options. For a product to be feasible or viable all three of the following requirements

need to be met within the current proposed rate structure:

- "A product we can collect at least 1 standard bale of in a 6 month time frame and can be clean enough to be accepted by the end processor"

- "We have a dependable buyer for that product"

- "The product has a value above \$0 after shipping, otherwise it would require further subsidy from garbage rates."

The second item — having a dependable buyer — has become an increasing challenge for Baker Sanitary and other companies that collect recyclables due to China's decision, starting in 2018, to stop accepting much of the recyclable material collected in the U.S. due in part to contamination by nonrecyclable material. China had been the largest buyer of America's

recyclables.

As for curbside recycling — Baker City is one of the largest Oregon cities that doesn't offer this service — Henry wrote that Baker Sanitary is willing to add curbside recycling but that it "would require an additional rate increase on top of the current proposal in order to cover the additional cost of thousands of new carts, a new truck dedicated to recycle pickup, a full-time driver for that route, and revenue to cover the costs of processing and finding a market for the product."

In other business Tuesday, the City Council will discuss a proposed memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Forest Service regarding the city's goal of reducing the risk of wildfire in its 10,000-acre watershed, which the federal agency manages.

LOCAL BRIEFING

County giving away herbicide

Baker County's Weed District is again giving away pre-mixed herbicide designed to target whitetop and Scotch thistle. There are changes to this year's event.

First, the person who picks up the herbicide must also be the one who will apply it. The applicator's name must be affixed to the container. Applicators must bring their own chemical-resistant container, preferably one that held gas or oil, and a pair of chemical-resistant gloves. There is a 5-gallon limit per household.

The giveaway locations and times:

- Richland, wildflower corner along Highway 86, west side of town, May 17, 7 a.m. to noon
- Baker City, former ODOT building, 1050 S. Bridge St., May 24, 7 a.m. to noon
- Baker City, former ODOT building, 1050 S. Bridge St., June 1, 7 a.m. to noon
- Hereford Community Hall and Unity Community Hall, June 7, 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Baker County Democrats meet Thursday

Baker County Democrats will have their monthly meeting on Thursday, May 16, at Rogers Fellowship Hall, 1995 Fourth St. Social time starts at 5:30 p.m., with the meeting at 6 p.m.

There will be a reorganization with new officers and delegates. Everyone is welcome.

County seeks volunteers for boards

Baker County is seeking volunteers for the following boards/committees:

- Early Learning Regional Council
- Baker County Planning Commission (a commission member and an alternate)
- Baker County Fair Board
- Transportation/Traffic Safety Commission
- Transient Lodging Tax Committee
- Baker County Cultural Coalition
- Baker County Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee: The County is seeking a co-exist member.
- Baker County Compensation Board

Volunteer forms are at www.bakercounty.org/commissioners. More information is available by calling the Commissioners' Office at 541-523-8200 or by emailing hmartin@bakercounty.org

Friends of Baker Heritage Museum collecting donations for yard sale

Friends of the Baker Heritage Museum are planning a yard sale during Miners Jubilee in July, and are accepting donated items, except clothing. To arrange to make a donation call Liz Miller at 541-300-5416. The group will also have its spring general meeting on May 29 at 5:30 p.m. at the museum, 2480 Grove St.

FIRE

Continued from Page 1A

The fire in Washington Gulch, about 4 miles west of town, was intended to burn piles of slash and other fuels left after a series of commercial logging and noncommercial tree-thinning projects about a decade ago, Hawkins said.

Another objective was to burn some of the young trees — mainly 6 feet or shorter — that have sprouted since the logging and thinning work, he said.

Those small trees can serve as "ladder fuels" — a route for flames to climb from the ground into the crowns of taller, mature trees, Hawkins said.

Friday's fire burned into some of those thickets of young trees, but in other places the flames didn't take hold on ground still damp from recently melted snow, he said.

"It was a patchy burn," he said.

Washington Gulch is a vital cog in the Forest Service's strategy to protect the nearby Baker City watershed from wildfire, Hawkins said.

Over the past 20 years or so the agency has done several thinning and prescribed burning projects

near the boundaries of the 10,000-acre watershed.

Last spring the Forest Service burned about 100 acres near Marble Creek, several miles northwest of Washington Gulch.

Washington Gulch is a challenging place to light prescribed fires because the proximity to Baker City increases the chances that smoke will drift into town, Hawkins said.

Weather forecasters expected winds to push most of the smoke to the south, away from the city, but a brief switch in the wind direction that lasted for about two hours late Friday ushered smoke into town, Hawkins said.

The air quality index peaked at 102 late Friday, which is in the "unhealthy for sensitive groups" category.

Saturday's average was in the "good" category.

"We had a little more smoke in town than we wanted," Hawkins said.

The Forest Service probably will plan a second prescribed fire on the same area of Washington Gulch. Friday's first reduced the fuel load enough that a later fire could be ignited when the ground is drier and flames more likely to spread.

HEART TO HEART

Working together to save three abandoned little kittens

On Saturday, May 4, we took a load of yard waste to the dump where we encountered an incredibly kind man who had just found three nearly newborn kittens in the garbage. The kittens were tiny and still had blue eyes. The kindly man explained that he didn't know what to do with the kittens as he was from out of town and only in Baker City to clear out his late father's home. We took a look at the kittens, which the man had very kindly wrapped in his vest and placed in the cab of his truck. They were filthy, tired and crying. We told the man that we would take the kittens for him and he was understandably relieved. We kept looking around for any sign of a mama cat or other babies, but apparently there were only the three that the man had found.

It was such great fortune that the man from out of town found the kittens when he did, as someone could have unknowingly dumped more refuse on the kittens, or they could've been taken out by the circling gulls. We took them first to our vet who unfortunately was out of town, so we next tried at the Best Friends, where thankfully Jaye and Jan were there to take over the care of the kittens. We helped Jan try to bottle-feed two of the kittens but they were exhaust-

ed and only wanted to sleep, while Jaye immediately took the third kitten to the Animal Clinic because the kitten had a deep gash on her back left leg. That kitten received a shot of antibiotic and also a topical cream for her leg and we were told that she might even lose the leg. Luckily, this pitiful tale has a happy ending: as of Tuesday, May 7, all three kittens are thriving and healing under the watchful eyes of Best Friends volunteers.

We are so very grateful to Jaye and Jan for taking these three little waifs and saving their lives, and Baker City is blessed to have Best Friends in its midst. As for the creatures who left these tiny souls to die at the dump, words cannot express what we hope will happen to you, but with luck it will be a similar fate to what you planned for these innocent little kittens. You could've taken them to the Fire Department, the Police Department, either of the vets' offices or contacted Best Friends. Your choice of solutions to your "problem" is reprehensible and disgusting. May you never know a peaceful night's sleep.

Lynn Johnston
Maurren Beverlin
Baker City

Try Community Connection transit services

The service that Community Connection provides with the Trolley and NEO Transit is of benefit to the community of Baker City. The cost of riding is minimal. For \$3 you can buy an all-day pass and make several stops, like shopping, doctor/dental appointments or to pay bills.

The drivers are competent and helpful. There is one driver in particular who is extra special. He goes out of his way to make the passenger feel special. He is very kind and helpful. His name is Jay Todd and many people know

him and call him J.R.

I hope the community utilizes the Trolley and NEO Transit more. They will even take you to La Grande to shop or for dialysis appointments or shopping to Pendleton. The drivers also go to Boise so that you can go to a doctor/dental appointment there.

Please try the Trolley in the future. You will not be disappointed in the service. With the high price of gas, Community Connection will save you money so you can have a little more in your pocket for other expenses.

Susan York
Baker City

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