

Local & State

New Arrivals At The Baker County Library

•2400 Resort St.

FICTION

- “Vendetta in Death,” J.D. Robb
- “Nothing Ventured,” Jeffrey Archer
- “Conversations with Friends,” Sally Rooney
- “The Girl Who Lived Twice,” David Lagercrantz
- “The Dark Side,” Danielle Steel

NONFICTION

- “Midnight in Chernobyl,” Adam Higginbotham
- “Sacred Duty,” Tom Cotton
- “No Crumbs Left,” Teri Turner
- “EveryTool’s a Hammer,” Adam Savage
- “Power Grab,” Jason Chaffetz

DVDS

- “Avengers, Endgame” (Sci-Fi)
- “The curse of La Llorona” (Horror)
- “Godzilla, King of the Monsters” (Sci-Fi)
- “Rocketman” (Musical)
- “The Secret Life of Pets 2” (Family)

HOURS

- Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Friday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
- Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Sunday, noon-4 p.m.

PROBATION

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Shirtcliff said Liam was playing with the gun on the floor of his father’s bedroom while his father slept when he accidentally fired the gun.

Peter Mankins, 33, pleaded guilty on Aug. 9 in Baker County Circuit Court to one count of criminally negligent homicide, a Class B felony, in connection with his son’s death. He also pleaded guilty to one count each of possession of methamphetamine and recklessly endangering another person, both Class A misdemeanors.

Visiting Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Jon Lieuallen sentenced Mankins to 34 months in prison after a settlement conference with the District Attorney’s Office.

On Aug. 23, Baker County Circuit Court Judge Greg Baxter sentenced Goodman to six months in jail and placed her on three years’ probation after she pleaded guilty to one count of possessing methamphetamine and one count of recklessly endangering another person in a plea agreement with the District Attorney’s Office. She also pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide, but prosecution on that crime was deferred, Shirtcliff said.

Goodman, who had been held at the Baker County Jail since Dec. 29, 2018, already had served eight months at the time of sentencing and was given credit for time served.

Baxter deferred judgment on the criminally negligent homicide charge during Good-

man’s 36-month probationary term. She must successfully complete formal probation and drug treatment during that time to avoid a prison sentence.

If her probation is revoked during the three-year period, Goodman will be sentenced to an 18-month prison term, with no credit for the 180 days served in the Baker County Jail while awaiting resolution of the charges, Shirtcliff said.

If she is successful, however, the felony charge will be removed from her record, he said.

Contact with her children will be determined by the Baker County Probation Department and possibly the Department of Human Services during the three-year probation term, Shirtcliff said.

Mankins and Goodman were charged with criminally negligent homicide for allowing 2-year-old Liam access to a loaded gun. Mankins received the harsher sentence because “more culpability rested with him,” Shirtcliff said.

“He was directly responsible for the firearms in the home,” he said. “They were his guns and he was in control of them.”

Goodman also had some degree of responsibility for the guns being accessible to the child, however, Shirtcliff said.

“She knew there were guns there,” he said.

Both parents were at the home at the time Liam was shot, Shirtcliff said.

Investigators found methamphetamine in the home and both Peter Mankins and Goodman tested positive for

methamphetamine at the time the crimes took place, based on toxicology reports, Shirtcliff said.

The crime of recklessly endangering another person, a Class A misdemeanor, charged the two with making the drug readily accessible to Liam.

A grand jury also had charged Mankins and Goodman with second-degree manslaughter, a Class B felony; and two counts of endangering the welfare of a minor, a Class A misdemeanor, for allowing drug activity to take place in the presence of Liam and his younger brother, who was 4 months old at the time. Those charges were dismissed as part of the couple’s plea agreements.

Had they been convicted of second-degree manslaughter for their son’s death, they would have faced mandatory minimum 75-month prison sentences.

Shirtcliff said at the time of Mankins’ sentencing that while he believed Mankins needed to serve prison time, the prosecutor also wanted him to receive drug treatment while in prison.

“The fact that he took responsibility for negligently causing the death of his son was also a factor in allowing him to plead guilty to the criminally negligent homicide charge and not face a longer prison sentence,” Shirtcliff stated.

As part of her probation, Goodman also was ordered not to use or possess controlled substances and to participate in a substance abuse evaluation and to follow any recommended treatment.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Two local officers will graduate from Basic Police Class on September 6

SALEM — Deputy Talon Colton of the Baker County Sheriff’s Office and Officer Mark Powell of the Baker City Police Department are members of the 391st Basic Police graduating class at the Oregon Public Safety Academy in Salem.

The class will graduate Sept. 6 at 11 a.m. at the Academy, 4190 Aumsville Highway SE.

Women’s empowerment and training event, ‘Compel,’ set for September 21

Stonecroft will hold a one-day women’s empowerment and training event titled “Compel” on Sept. 21.

The program, aimed at training Christian women to reach others with the Gospel, will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Community Connection, 2810 Cedar Street. The cost of lunch will be \$10. To RSVP, contact Jerri Wickert at jerrijohn2@gmail.com or call 541-519-4708.

Soil and water conservation districts schedule meetings for September

Baker County’s four soil and water conservation districts have scheduled meetings during September. Agendas for any of the meetings are available by calling Tara at 541-532-7121, extension 100.

- Burnt River, Sept. 10, 5:30 p.m. at the USDA Service Center, 3990 Midway Drive in Baker City.
- Baker Valley, Sept. 12, noon at the USDA Service Center.
- Eagle Valley, Sept. 23, noon, location to be determined.
- Keating, Sept. 24, noon at the USDA Service Center.

Baker City, Baker County planning commissions set work sessions

The Baker County Planning Commission has scheduled a work session for Sept. 10 at 5 p.m. at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St. Planners will discuss potential revisions to the county’s zoning ordinance.

The Baker City Planning Commission will have a work session Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St. Commissioners will discuss possible updates to the city’s development code and to the economic section of the city’s comprehensive land-use plan.

More information about either meeting is available by calling the city/county planning department at 541-523-8219 or by emailing Eva Henes at ehenes@bakercounty.org.

TRAFFIC

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Officials have also discussed changes to the intersection of Hughes Lane and Cedar Street, and widening the bike lane along both routes to improve access to the center of town.

The Leo Adler Memorial Parkway now leads from the Baker Sports Complex to Hughes Lane.

Owen said one possibility is restriping lanes at the Hughes/Cedar inter-

section, and adding a turn lane to make it easier for trucks and larger vehicles to turn there.

“It would be a combined effort between city, county, and state because they are city, county, and state facilities,” said Owen.

10th Street is a state highway but jurisdictionally the city has control over access.

The boundary between the city and the county is the center of Pocahontas Road and Hughes Lane.

Rain helps quiet Granite Gulch fire

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Wind-blown embers from the Granite Gulch fire started several spot fires Wednesday, prompting fire officials to call in a helicopter and two airplanes to prevent flames from spreading south of the Minam River in the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Light rain on Wednesday and Thursday, along with higher humidities, slowed the fire’s spread and allowed workers to concentrate on those spot blazes.

“The spots showed very little growth (Thursday) afternoon and are being held in the riparian area,” Incident Commander Adam Wing said.

None of the spot fires spread more

than 75 feet from river’s edge, he said.

Officials had expected the lightning-sparked fire would be more active Wednesday due to hot, dry weather and gust winds. The temperature reached a record of 100 degrees at the Baker City Airport.

See **Granite Gulch** / Page 5A

BOND

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The group will meet three to four times in September and October and is scheduled to report back to the Board by Nov. 1.

The group’s charge, as approved by the Board at its July 9 meeting will be to:

- Review the facilities needs identified by the Long Range Facilities Planning Committee.
- Review the draft proposal being developed based on public feedback, and make recommendations about what should be addressed in a potential bond measure.
- Consider the different options for financing a potential bond, including amount of bond and length of payback period.
- Develop a timeline and long-term plan for addressing capital improvement projects relating to facilities needs.
- Recommend to the School Board a potential bond package that could be submitted to voters.

Witty said the new committee will not redo work performed by former committees, which gathered information leading to the earlier \$48 million bond measure.

As with the past groups, the new committee’s only authority will be to recommend a course of action to the School Board and District administrators, Witty said.

In reviewing community comments made after the 2018 bond measure’s failure in November and in speaking directly with critics of the plan, Witty said he believes

the District could succeed in the next election if certain changes were made.

He says patrons have spoken in support of a less expensive bond funded over a shorter period of time that would pay to remodel existing buildings rather than to build a new school.

The \$48 million plan proposed in November 2018 included construction of a new elementary school and would have been paid for over a 30-year period.

The bond measure, which would have cost property owners \$1.97 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Voters rejected the measure, 68% to 32%.

In May, the Board considered a new plan presented by representatives of the Boise LKV Architects firm and the Wenaha Group, a project management group and consulting firm, that also worked with the District on last year’s bond measure.

The new plan has proposed asking voters in May 2020 to approve a \$10 million bond to be paid over a 10-year term. A \$4 million matching state grant and \$2 million to be contributed by the School District would bring the total to \$16 million.

The tentative proposal calls for the funding to be used to reconfigure existing buildings to make better use of available space. That would include placing K-2 students at Brooklyn Primary School; Grades 3-4 at South Baker; and moving Grades 5-6 to the current middle school building. Seventh- and eighth-graders would move to Baker High School with

remodeling to separate the younger students from those in Grades 9-12.

The proposed improvements under the new plan also would include district-wide safety and security upgrades and energy efficiency improvements. Money also is included to pay for anticipated expenses during construction.

There are no plans to upgrade the former North Baker Elementary School building, which would continue to be used by the Baker Web Academy and Early College, Eagle Cap High School and early learning programs.

Another group of community representatives is meeting to consider alternative uses for the Central School Building, which was closed by the School District in 2009.

Witty told the Board during its August meeting that the District expects to turn the building over to the BHS/ Baker Technical Institute’s Brownfield environmental science class. The class could

qualify for a \$200,000 grant to begin the project and possibly acquire more grant funding to complete the work needed to revitalize the historic building and transform it into a community asset, he said.

Hazardous materials cleanup would include the removal of lead paint and asbestos, Witty said.

Another group is forming to work toward securing grants to fund improvements at the Baker High School auditorium, he said.

The Board also agreed to authorize Witty to hire a head grounds keeper, a position that was cut from the District budget in years past.

“I’ve been here four years and this has been a challenge point for me,” Witty said of the school grounds. “I think the grounds look better, but I’m not personally satisfied. When you own something you need to do your very best to keep it up.”

Witty said he would like to hire the new grounds keeper this fall and to provide train-

ing in the various aspects of the job, including pesticide and herbicide use and irrigation systems to prepare for next spring and summer.

Witty said he had been particularly frustrated with work this summer on the Baker Middle School field on the west side of the school. The installation of underground sprinklers was delayed by a mix-up in scheduling. The work has been completed and the field will be reseeded shortly, Witty said this week.

The long-term goal is to install underground sprinklers on fields throughout the District over a period of time, he said.

“It saves on the water bill and allows you to do a much better job,” Witty said.

The superintendent also has proposed adding a full-

time assistant to the business office staff to help ease that workload.

The full-time position would replace Vickie Christensen, who has resigned effective Sept. 30. Christensen had transitioned recently from her longtime role as full-time payroll/ benefits coordinator to a part-time position. The new full-time assistant would provide help to the accounts payable and payroll departments to take pressure off other employees in those roles.

“As we grow our systems it puts more pressure on (them),” he said. “We’re getting to the point of pushing to where we’re going to lose people.

“You shouldn’t lose good people over not supporting them to get their jobs done,” Witty told the Board.

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