

Baker City Herald

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In SPORTS, 6A

Baker ready for Ontario

IN THIS EDITION: Local • Health & Fitness • Outdoors • TV **\$1.50**



Community Christmas tree candidates sought

The Baker City Community Development Department and Baker City Downtown are in search of this year's 2019 Community Christmas Tree. Candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Within 3 miles of Court Plaza (downtown Baker City on Court Avenue between Main and Resort streets)
- Maximum height of 40 feet

If you would like to submit your tree for consideration contact Robin Nudd at 541-524-2036 or rnudd@bakercity.com by Nov. 1.

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Jim Tomlinson of Baker City.

WEATHER

Today
53 / 34



Rain showers

Saturday
51 / 30



Rain showers

Sunday
50 / 33



Rain showers

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Residents Balk At Proposal To Build 70-Foot Cell Tower Near Fairgrounds

Cell Controversy



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Looking south across the proposed site for a 70-foot cell tower. The property is just north of D Street near its intersection with East Street north of the Baker County Fairgrounds.

By Samantha O'Conner
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and Jayson Jacoby
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Several people told the Baker City Planning Commission Wednesday evening that they oppose an application from Verizon Wireless to build a 70-foot-tall cell tower north of the Fairgrounds.

The Commission did not make a decision at the conclusion of the public hearing at City Hall, which attracted an audience of about 30.

Commissioners will have another public hearing on Verizon's application for a conditional-use permit on Nov. 13 at 6 p.m., also at City Hall, 1655 First St.

The proposed site is a 2.12-acre property, owned by Carney and Deborah Lansford, that's just north of D Street near its intersection with East Street. The property, which is zoned general-industrial, is north of Leo Adler Field and currently houses storage units.

According to the city's zoning ordi-

nance, Verizon could build a cell tower up to 50 feet high on the property without a conditional-use permit. The company would still have to submit an application, but the decision would be made by the planning director rather than the planning commissioners, who are appointed by the Baker City Council.

Residents, some of whom submitted written comments, cited multiple reasons for opposing the tower, including that it would block their views and reduce their property values.

Some people also planned to testify about what they believe are harmful health effects caused by electronic emissions from cell towers.

But Commission Chairman Alan Blair told the audience that commissioners are not allowed, under federal law, to consider electronic emissions from cell towers in deciding whether to approve the application.

Drew Martin, the city's attorney, attended the meeting on behalf of the city and encouraged the commission to "simply stick to the conditions that are

in the code."

Martin said the federal government "has decided that it ... will make all decisions pertaining to the health effects of cell towers."

This is the second time a proposed cell tower in that neighborhood has raised the ire of residents.

In September 2015 Verizon applied for a conditional use permit to build a 100-foot-tall tower on industrial property immediately west of the Lansfords' parcel.

After a public hearing during which several residents objected to Verizon's plan, the Planning Commission in October 2015 voted unanimously to deny the application.

Commissioners cited the "negative impacts on adjacent properties and on the public" that could not be mitigated by imposing conditions on Verizon.

During Wednesday's hearing, Ann Mehaffy told commissioners she had also testified in opposition to Verizon's 2015 application.

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COUNTY RECEIVES 3 BIDS FOR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Fire union: County puts 'safety up for bid'

By Chris Collins
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A review of three bids submitted to the Baker County Commission for a contract to provide ambulance services in Baker City and about half of the rest of the county will be the subject of public hearings in the coming months.

In the meantime, the president of the Baker City Professional Firefighters Local 922 has posted a letter on Facebook aimed at detailing the issue for people who would receive the service once the contract is awarded.

See Ambulance / Page 3A

Pilot pulls application

By Jayson Jacoby
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Pilot Flying J Travel Centers has withdrawn its application for a project in Baker City that the property owner said was dead more than three weeks ago.

The Baker City-County Planning Department received an email Monday from the company requesting the withdrawal of its site design review application, according to senior planner Eva Henes.

The company, based in Knoxville, Tennessee, filed an application in late August proposing to replace the Baker Truck Corral with a new truck stop.

But Kurt Miller, who owns the Truck Corral, said "the deal was already dead" when the Herald published a story Sept. 25 about Pilot's application.

The planning department had earlier sent notices to property owners in the area about the application, and was working to process the application pending a decision by planning director Holly Kerns about whether to approve it.

In an email response to a request for a comment, Stephanie Myers, supervisor of external communication for Pilot Flying J, wrote that "as a private company, Pilot Flying J does not disclose details of its new business developments."

AMTRAK CANCELED ROUTE THROUGH EASTERN OREGON IN 1997

Advocates for resuming Amtrak service to meet Oct. 26 in La Grande

LA GRANDE — A group of advocates for returning passenger train service to Eastern Oregon will meet Oct. 26 in La Grande for what they bill as the Eastern Oregon Passenger Rail Summit.

"This is an effort that won't happen overnight, and it's going to depend on support from communities along the route," said Jon Nuxoll of Eugene, president of the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA).

The organization wants to resurrect Amtrak's Pioneer route, which ran from Seattle to Salt Lake City and Chicago, passing through and stopping in La Grande, Baker City and Ontario.

Amtrak ended the route in 1997 due to budget cuts.

There have been several efforts in the ensuing 22 years to resurrect the Pioneer route, some of which have gained support from members of Congress including Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden and Rep. Greg Walden.

But none of these campaigns was successful.



Bob Mack / FloridaTimes-Union file photo

A group is trying to resurrect Amtrak's Pioneer passenger train route through Eastern Oregon. Amtrak canceled the route in 1997.

Nuxoll, who is organizing the Oct. 26 meeting from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St., hopes to change that.

"People in Washington's Yakima Valley are organizing to bring trains back to Eastern Washington," Nuxoll said. "We're hoping to bring together similar local support in the Blue Mountains and Treasure Valley."

Nuxoll contends the need for passenger rail service is greater now than it was when Amtrak canceled the

Pioneer route in 1997.

"There's now just one daily bus on I-84," Nuxoll said. "The only other option to driving is flying out of Pendleton. And I-84 isn't any safer or less crowded."

Nuxoll said local officials are slated to speak at the Oct. 26 meeting, along with organizers of the Yakima Valley group.

More information about AORTA is available on its Facebook page and at www.aorta.chcs.net



TODAY
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MONDAY — RECIPES THAT CUT THE SALT WITHOUT SACRIFICING FLAVOR