

EDITORIAL

Golf course
lease deal
is sensible

Baker City Manager Fred Warner's proposal to transfer operation of the city-owned Quail Ridge Golf Course to the nonprofit corporation that runs Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort, an idea endorsed by the City Council Tuesday, makes sense for both parties.

The 18-hole course is an important city asset, a recreation amenity for local residents and an attraction for visitors.

But Quail Ridge has in the past also drained significant amounts of money from the city's general fund, which includes much more vital services such as police and fire protection. The city has reduced that general fund transfer — it's \$40,000 this fiscal year, compared with a total of about \$150,000 in the early 2000s. Keeping the course in good shape and ensuring it's well-run will reduce the risk of the course reverting to being a major monetary albatross.

Mike Brooks has done a good job running the course since he signed a four-year lease with the city that took effect Jan. 1, 2017. But Warner told councilors Tuesday that Brooks, though he will remain as the teaching professional at the course, doesn't want to continue as the lease-holder.

Warner's idea to transfer the lease to the Baker Community Development Corporation, the nonprofit that owns Anthony Lakes, The Trailhead in Baker City and runs several Forest Service campgrounds, is a logical choice.

The corporation has ample experience in running seasonal recreational businesses. And speaking of seasons, there's little overlap in the operations of Quail Ridge, which typically opens in March, weather permitting, and Anthony Lakes, which closes in early April.

Although the provisions of the current lease will continue through 2020 — the contractor pays the city an annual management fee of \$65,000, a monthly fee of about \$5,100 to lease city-owned equipment, and is responsible for some equipment maintenance — the City Council should review the deal next year based on the experiences of the Baker Community Development Corporation, with the ultimate goal of eliminating general fund transfers to the golf course.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

Farmers and ranchers will miss Greg Walden

As someone who owns and operates a cattle ranch, I take pride in saying Congressman Walden is working harder than anyone in D.C. to cut through the red tape that we farmers and ranchers live with every day.

Greg has supported the Trump Administration as they work hard to renegotiate trade deals and expand access for our farmers and ranchers to foreign markets — like the newly negotiated USMCA and the U.S. trade deal with Japan — a great win for Oregon agriculture!

In Congress, Greg has passed legislation that would improve forest management and decrease the risk of wildfire by utilizing tools like grazing and thinning to reduce fuel loads on public lands. Greg has fought hard to ensure farmers and ranchers can continue to rely on the protections provided in the Farm Bill. He has worked tirelessly to advance legislation time and again that would federally delist the gray wolf and give the states the ability to better manage wolf populations.

I've watched Greg as he has spoken with leaders in the agriculture industries from Eastern Oregon throughout his career in Congress. His passion for the industries is clear in those meetings, and he has always carried the message he receives in those discussions back to D.C. I have had the pleasure of working with him in Oregon and in Washington, D.C. The farmers

and ranchers of Oregon are going to miss having Congressman Walden around, thankfully we still have one more year!

Matt McElligott
North Powder

Wyden's call for river protection shows foresight

As I prepare for the holidays, I take stock in the things that matter the most to me. It is clear, that the landscape of NE Oregon is one of those things, writ large. Eastern Oregon's magic captured me the moment I stepped out of our dusty station wagon in 1961 onto the gravel driveway of what had just become my family's cattle ranch near Baker City. I was five and we moved into a house comprised of three tiny homes built by early settlers to the area. Those shacks were skidded down the hill and stuck together over a precarious, river rock foundation. The living room had three doors in a row and the lumpy floor could not tolerate our jump roping. It

was the most beloved house I have ever lived in, on land that is wedded to my soul.

Sen. Ron Wyden recently announced that he is seeking nominations for new Wild and Scenic River designations. He wants input from all Oregonians and is holding a "Wild and Scenic River Forum" in Portland. He is also asking for nominations via email at rivers@wyden.senate.gov. As rural folks, it can be difficult to make our voices heard over the din of opinions from larger population centers. I will be emailing Sen. Wyden and nominating rivers in Northeastern Oregon that directly impact our quality of life and underpin our growing tourist economy.

Our western culture, wild landscapes, and unique lifestyle distinguish NE Oregon as an enviable place to live or visit. The most important thing I can do for the future of our community is to help preserve our local waterways. The clean water and critical habitat we are seeking to protect is the lifeblood of future generations who want to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and a sustainable, outdoor recreation based, economy for Baker County.

Thank you, Ron Wyden, for your foresight and determination to move forward with this bill and to enable rural folks to have a choice in what waterways will be selected. Now is the time to make your voice heard for local rivers that you love.

Robin Coen
Boise

Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Letters are limited to 350 words. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days. Writers must sign their letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com

Feds vs. scammers: Not a bet I'd like to make

I was debating the other day whether to shell out 26 bucks for a new book, but then I checked my email and discovered that my financial worries are over, and probably for the rest of my life.

I was, as you can imagine, greatly relieved by this most unexpected news.

According to the message in my inbox I have had the great fortune to be selected to receive a donation of \$2.8 million, which should easily cover my book needs for the foreseeable future.

It will also help with the mortgage and my other decidedly modest monetary obligations.

The sender of the message, I learned, had won \$40 million in the "American lottery" and was donating part of it to five people and charities in memory of his wife, who died from cancer.

Which is quite generous, you have to admit.

The message didn't say how many of these five lucky recipients are people and how many are charities, so I can't say precisely how fortunate I actually was.

I'd like to believe I'm the only person selected and that the four others are charities, but I understand how unlikely that is.



JAYSON JACOBY

Even to be one of five is bucking the odds, after all.

Lest I carry on this charade for more paragraphs than is reasonable, I recognized this email for the scam it so obviously is.

I no more believed that I had to come into an unanticipated windfall than I believed, as another email the same day assured me, that I have been "pre-approved for a \$215,500 unsecured business line of credit at 3.91%."

Even though the latter missive was allegedly penned by a "vice president of portfolio management" and promised that "you can have funding as soon as today!"

That exclamation point almost gets me every time, temporarily stunning my instinctive distrust with the sheer excitement that only that particular punctuation mark can convey.

This sort of email, and its audible cousin that clogs our cellphones, is of course a defining characteristic of our age.

This strikes me as something of a tradeoff.

In exchange for the ability to plumb all the world's information, instantly and from almost anyplace, we are subjected to a barrage of slimy, if generally transparent, scams as predictable in their regularity as afternoon rainshowers in the tropics.

I'll concede that my complacency in this matter stems from not having ever been the victim of one of these schemes.

I'm sure I would be more inclined to anger than to amused aloofness had I ever opened a bill and learned, much to my surprise, that I had recently taken a month-long cruise or put a down payment on a Ferrari which was quite clearly not parked in my garage.

(Actually I don't own a garage. I am certain, however, that if a Ferrari were parked in my driveway I could hardly miss it. If nothing else I'd have less space for the much more mainstream vehicles I actually do own.)

Obviously these pitches wouldn't be ubiquitous if they didn't work. Not that they need to work very often — the immense volume of potential victims, in an era when almost everyone has a cellphone

or an email account and most of us have both, ensures that even a minuscule percentage of "success" can be lucrative to the cretins involved.

It happens that on the same day I was alerted to the \$2.8 million donation and offered the sort of credit line my income falls far short of justifying, I also received two legitimate emails related to this topic.

One is from Congressman Greg Walden, touting the House's passage of a bill Walden sponsored, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act.

The other is from the IRS, and it suggests ways to avoid a variety of online scams.

The press release from Walden's office refers to robocalls as a "menace."

"Today Congress once again took steps to hang up on these callers," the release reads. "When you receive a call, you should be able to trust that there is a reason for that call — especially when it is from a familiar area code."

Of course Walden is correct.

But I don't share his confidence in the efficacy of the legislation.

The press release contends that "Congress listened to the American people and voted to end these pesky calls."

"End" seems to me more than a bit of an exaggeration.

The problem, again, is volume.

Walden's press release highlights the scale of the task, noting that last year 47.8 billion robocalls were placed nationwide.

Of those, an estimated 14.1 million were made in the 541 area code.

This number actually seems to me low, since I'm pretty sure my cellphone alone received 14 million such calls.

Regardless, I think it's all but impossible that the federal government can prevent 47.8 billion of anything from happening.

The purveyors of robocalls have proved a formidable foe, and I've seen nothing that convinces me the scammers aren't capable of feinting whenever the feds jab.

Perhaps you recall the Do Not Call List, a term as misleading as anything the government has yet conceived.

The feds' record in such matters leaves me to conclude that they'll purify our communications system about the same time I get \$2.8 million from an email.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.