

NOVEMBER

- High Temperature: 62, the 5th
- Low Temperature: 0, the 30th
- Total Precipitation: .21 (avg.: .83)

Baker City Council Agrees To Explore Potential Train Quiet Zone

Whistle Worries



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald file photo

A Union Pacific freight train passing by South Baker Intermediate School.

By Samantha O’Conner
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NOVEMBER 13 — More than 50 people who support a proposal to stop freight trains from blowing their whistles at crossings in Baker City made their case to the City Council Tuesday night.

Councilors voted 6-0 to direct city staff to file a notice of intent to apply for a Quiet Zone designation.

There is no cost to file the notice of intent, and it doesn’t obligate the city to file an application.

Dennis Dougherty and Peter Far-

go, Baker City residents and members of the group promoting a quiet zone, Neighbors for a Safer, Quieter and Healthier Baker City, presented a slideshow explaining what a Quiet Zone is, and listing ways that train whistles can affect people. They focused mainly on students at South Baker Intermediate School, which is next to the railroad tracks.

Anna Fargo, who’s also a member of the group, discussed the health effects of train whistles. They can reach 110 decibels, she said, and the World Health Organization recom-

mends 54 decibels “to avoid adverse health impacts” and “44 (decibels) at night for good sleep.”

Quiet Zone advocates submitted a petition signed by more than 230 residents, as well as several letters in support of the proposal.

Carrie Folkman, owner of Mountain View RV Park on Hughes Lane, submitted a letter and she also spoke to councilors Tuesday. In her letter, Folkman wrote that some of her guests, in online reviews, wrote that they were bothered by train whistles.

B2H suit filed

■ Groups hope to block power line that would run through Baker, Union counties

By Jayson Jacoby
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NOVEMBER 15 — Two La Grande groups have filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to block the proposed Boardman-to-Hemingway power transmission line, which would run through Baker and Union counties.

The Stop B2H Coalition and Greater Hells Canyon Council filed the suit Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Pendleton.

The B2H project is undergoing a multi-year review through the Oregon Department of Energy. Idaho Power, which is partnering with PacifiCorp and the Bonneville Power Administration, hopes to start building the line in 2023.

Jim Kreider of La Grande, co-chairperson of the Stop B2H Coalition, said Thursday that the group filed the lawsuit because of a pending legal deadline to challenge the BLM’s authorization of the proposed route.

The BLM’s Record of Decision for B2H was signed on Nov. 17, 2017. Kreider said legal challenges to that decision must be filed within two years.

Lehman named national FFA officer

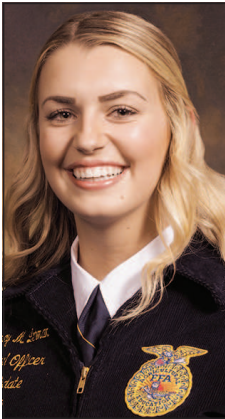
By Chris Collins
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NOVEMBER 4 — Kourtney Lehman, a 2017 Baker High School graduate who served as president of the Oregon FFA State Officer Team in 2017-18, has been elected secretary of the national organization.

Lehman, 21, was one of six elected to the national team Saturday near the close of the four-day National FFA Convention and Expo, which began Oct. 30 at Indianapolis.

Lehman will remain in Indianapolis until Thursday to begin preparing for her new role.

She said in a telephone interview today that she is looking forward to the year ahead.



Kourtney Lehman

Walk home takes bad turn

By Chris Collins
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NOVEMBER 29 — When the first snow of the season fell Monday in Baker City, some took the time to enjoy it.

Others complained as the harsh reality of winter set in even though it came a bit later than in some years past.

And still others used it as an opportunity to bully a schoolmate and cause hurt and unhappiness.

Snowball fights can be fun if they are fought on equal ground. But four against one has little chance of ending happily for the one.

Madison Sullivan found herself in that situation on her way home from South Baker Intermediate School Monday afternoon.

Madison turned 12 on Nov. 14. She was diagnosed with autism when



S. John Collins / Baker City Herald

Madison Sullivan received support from friends when she returned to school Tuesday.

she was 21 months old.

Because she has autism, she wasn’t quite sure what was happening to her

when four students from school ganged up on her to repeatedly throw snowballs at her face from close range while she stood at the front gate of her home Monday afternoon.

But her parents, John and Angie Sullivan, who weren’t home at the time, saw what they say is a clear case of bullying, or even harassment or assault, based on the surveillance cameras at their home that recorded two separate videos of just a little more than a minute each of the rock throwing and snowball pelting their daughter endured.

The attackers were four boys, ranging in age from 9 to 11, the Sullivans said.

The bullying actually started on Nov. 20, they said, when their daughter was heckled on the playground by the boys who called her names and

made derogatory comments about her. Madison returned to school on Thursday, but was upset by the treatment she’d received on the previous day and so her parents brought her home from school early.

When Madison returned to school this Monday, she was attacked after school just as she arrived at the gate to her family home.

“No kid should be victimized at their own house after school,” John Sullivan said. “Where is she supposed to feel safe at?”

The incident began with the boys throwing rocks at her from across the street. As they approached they began making snowballs to throw at her. One video shows the four boys standing face-to-face with Madison as they took turns throwing snowballs directly at her face and head.

Owner restoring former night spot

By Samantha O’Conner
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NOVEMBER 22 — A former favorite spot for nightlife in Baker City is getting a royal makeover just in time for the Christmas parade and tree-lighting event on Saturday, Dec. 7.

Jeff Jentzsch of Rupert, Idaho, recently bought the former Royal Cafe and Lounge, a longtime popular dance place, at 1902 Main St., as an investment.

Jentzsch said someone mentioned that it would be fun to have one last dance before he remodels the interior of the building, which is on the east

side of Main Street just north of Court Avenue.

He was intrigued.

“The stainless steel floor is still there and that’s what we’re trying to do, is get this back to a semi-presentable state and do one last dance,” Jentzsch said.

Police seize stolen car

By Chris Collins
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NOVEMBER 22 — A car that police believe was stolen Sunday during a robbery in Baker City was recovered by the Baker County Sheriff’s Office Wednesday at Haines.

The investigation began Tuesday while Sheriff Travis Ash and Deputy Eric Colton were in Haines investigating a report of vehicles blocking the alley behind the Haines Mercantile, a Sheriff’s Office press release stated.

A 1994 Honda Civic, occupied by Paul Lloyd Niehaus, 52, and Jamie Lynne Starboard, 39, pulled up to the site while officers were investigating. Ash checked the status of the Honda Civic and found that it had been stolen in Baker City Sunday.

Baxter the new district attorney

NOVEMBER 27 — Gov. Kate Brown on Tuesday appointed Greg M. Baxter, the son of recently retired Baker County Circuit Court Judge Greg Baxter, as Baker County district attorney.

The younger Baxter, 34, fills a vacancy created by Brown’s decision to appoint District Attorney Matt Shirtcliff as Circuit Court judge as of Nov. 1. Shirtcliff replaced the elder Baxter on the bench.

In announcing her appointment of Baxter as district attorney, Brown praised the 2003 Baker High School graduate’s experience.

“Greg Baxter has earned the trust of residents, law enforce-



Baxter

ment, and community partners in Eastern Oregon,” Brown stated in a press release. “His experience as a prosecutor and his deep ties to the community will serve him well as he assumes his role as Baker County’s district attorney.”

Baxter will serve the remainder of Shirtcliff’s term, which continues through the end of 2020.

Baxter will run for a four-year term in the May 2020 election.

Baxter grew up in Baker City, where his father served as district attorney before being elected as Circuit Court judge.

The younger Baxter, who currently serves as Union County’s chief deputy district attorney, announced in October that he would file for the Baker County district attorney position.



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