

Baker City Herald

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IN THIS EDITION: Local • Home & Living • Sports Monday \$1.50



In SPORTS, 6A

Baker 2-1
at home

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish
To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Keith Miles of Baker City.

Sports, 3A

NAMPA, Idaho — Baker’s varsity wrestling team finished 24th out of 79 teams at the Rollie Lane Invitational Friday and Saturday, and coach Brandon Young was impressed by the Bulldogs’ performance.

Based on Baker’s results at the Nampa tournament, Young thinks this year’s team can surpass the 2019 squad’s school-best fourth-place finish at the state tournament.

BRIEFING

‘Bag It’ movie to
be shown Jan. 15

The documentary “Bag It,” which follows a man who’s trying to reduce his use of plastic, will be shown for free on Jan. 15 at the Baker County Library, 2400 Resort St. Doors open at 6 p.m., with the film starting at 6:30 p.m. The showing is sponsored by Baker City Trash Talk and the Baker Food Co-op.

Popcorn and drinks will be provided. Please bring drink and food containers if possible. Baker Food Co-op will have door prizes, and there will be a conversation about reducing the use of plastic products.

WEATHER

Today
39 / 32

Rain or snow
showers

Tuesday
40 / 32

Snow showers

Full forecast on the back
of the B section.

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Upgrades Coming To Baker High School Gymnasium

New Look At BHS



Kathy Orr / Baker City Herald

The removal of the front row of seats in the bleachers on the east side of the Baker High School gym later this month will create room for players and coaches to sit on chairs, and allow spectators to walk behind the teams rather than in front.

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

A renovation project planned this winter inside the Baker High School gym is designed to benefit athletes and spectators alike.

The Baker School District will replace the two scoreboards with new digital units, and the one on the north wall of the gym will display more information than the current board, said Buell Gonzales Jr., the district’s athletic director.

The new north scoreboard will list the number of points and fouls for up to six players from both teams.

Because both of the new score-

boards are digital, the names of the two teams can be changed for every game. The current boards show home and away, and during the district and state Class 1A tournaments, a worker in a power lift has to manually place the teams’ names before each game.

Eliminating that requirement is one reason that Baker County Tournaments, the nonprofit that organizes the two annual Class 1A tournaments, contributed \$5,000 to the \$27,000 cost for the two scoreboards, said Kathy Taylor, chair of the organization.

“All of the score clock upgrades will enhance the experience of the partici-

pants in the tournaments and for our local players,” Taylor said.

The School District also contributed \$5,000, Gonzales said. The balance was raised through donations, including from Coca-Cola.

The new scoreboards also have the ability to show a shot clock. Although Oregon high school basketball games don’t use a shot clock now, Gonzales said that’s all but certain to change.

The new system also has clocks in each of the four locker rooms, so teams can track how much time is left in a game, or for halftime.

See **Upgrades** / Page 2A

Idaho Power offers to help county lure visitors to parks

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Idaho Power is offering to pay half the cost, up to \$10,000, to hire a consultant to help Baker County find ways to bring more visitors to the county’s financially ailing Hewitt and Holcomb parks near Richland.

The Boise company made the offer in a recent letter responding to a letter from Bill Harvey, chairman of the Baker County Board of Commissioners.

In the letter, Brett Dumas, Idaho Power’s director of environmental affairs, wrote that “While we do not feel it is the responsibility of our ratepayers or share owners to take on the additional cost burden of operating and maintaining Hewitt and

Holcomb parks, we are committed to the future vitality of these parks.”

Dumas wrote that hiring a consultant could help county officials come up with strategies for bringing more visitors to the area, and thus boosting revenue from the two parks on the Powder River arm of Brownlee Reservoir.

“Idaho Power believes generating ideas to enhance tourism interest in these parts is one of the best opportunities to ensure these parks continue to serve the citizens of Baker County in the years to come,” Dumas wrote.

Baker County collected a yearly average of about \$57,680 from the two parks during the 2016-17 and 2017-18 fiscal years through a

combination of camping fees, season passes and sales of ice, firewood and water.

The yearly average for the previous two fiscal years, 2014-15 and 2015-16, was about \$70,900.

County officials blame the declining revenue on inconsistent water levels in Brownlee Reservoir, which at times have left the parks’ boat ramps unusable, as well as health advisories resulting from blooms of toxic blue-green algae.

The Baker County Board of Commissioners is scheduled to discuss the parks department budget situation when it meets Wednesday morning at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St. The parks discussion is set for 10 a.m.

School board to discuss bond

By Chris Collins
ccollins@bakercityherald.com

The Baker School Board has scheduled a work session Thursday to review plans for a bond measure to be placed on the May ballot and to hear the District’s latest audit report, among other business.

The meeting will begin at 5 p.m. at the District Office, 2090 Fourth St.

The audit report will be presented by Mitch Saul, a certified public accountant

with the Solutions firm of John Day.

Next, the Board plans to review a proposed \$7.5 million bond measure. The bond, which would be repaid over 10 years is estimated to cost Baker School District residents 66 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

It would be paired with a \$4 million state matching grant and \$5 million from the Baker School District for a total of \$16.5

million to fund school improvements.

The Board will review ongoing needs at the schools along with bond rates and a potential bond resolution, ballot title and bond time line as part of Thursday’s discussion.

In other business, Silas Turner, Baker High School guidance counselor, will lead a discussion about diversity.

The Board will consider a standing committee with

representatives from the District and the City of Baker City; review policies and consider any questions that come up in that discussion; review a revised organizational leadership chart; and consider the impact of student activities and events on classroom instruction time.

The work session is expected to last for about three hours, according to the time line presented as part of the agenda.

Cell tower appeal hearing Tuesday

The Baker City Council will have a special meeting Tuesday to consider Verizon Wireless’ appeal of a denial of the company’s request to build a 70-foot cell tower near Leo Adler Field.

The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St.

The Baker City Planning Commission voted 5-2 on Dec. 4 to deny Verizon’s application for a conditional-use permit for the tower on general-industrial property just north of D Street near its intersection with East Street.

The city’s zoning rules allow a cell tower of up to 50 feet on that property without a conditional-use permit. But according to Verizon’s appeal, its engineers determined that 70 feet is the minimum height needed to “resolve a significant gap in coverage and capacity in the City.”

The majority of the Planning Commission concluded that concerns about how the proposed 70-foot tower would affect views — a complaint several residents expressed to the Commission — could not be mitigated except by requiring Verizon to limit the tower’s height to 50 feet. That’s the maximum the city’s zoning ordinance allows without a conditional-use permit.

The City Council will have a work session Wednesday at 5:30 p.m., also at City Hall.

Three on list to replace Bentz

Commissioners from Baker County and eight other counties will decide today who will replace Cliff Bentz as state senator for District 30.

Bentz, an Ontario Republican, resigned Jan. 2 to devote his time to running for Congress.

Republican Party precinct committee members from the counties in District 30 met Saturday in John Day to appoint three candidates for commissioners to consider.

That trio is Lynn Findley of Vale, the current state representative for District 60; Rod Runyon of The Dalles; and Eric Wattenburg of Sisters.

The fourth applicant was Daniel Thompson of Jefferson County.



TODAY
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Senior Menus 2A
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WEDNESDAY — GO! MAGAZINE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE