

Baker County Commission: Position 1

Bruce Nichols

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I have spent most of my life in Baker City with the exception of my college years, military service, and about four years in Ontario, Oregon. I was born in 1951 and raised in Baker City. My wife Kelly and I each have three children who are all Baker Bulldogs.

I began working during the summer months for several different ranches in Baker Valley putting up hay and silage prior to turning 16. The year I turned 16 I worked at the “Paint Your Wagon” movie site on East Eagle Creek for a catering service that provided meals for the actors and crew. That same year I began working for Safeway stores throughout high school and college. I joined the U.S. Air Force in 1971, serving at several different duty stations both stateside and overseas, including Turkey and Germany. I began my college education while in the Air Force through the University of Maryland, and upon returning to civilian life, completed my college education at Eastern Oregon State College (now EOU), earning a BS degree in Business and Economics with an emphasis in accounting and agri-business.



PREVIOUS PUBLIC SERVICE OR PERTINENT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Baker County Commissioner since January 2017. Commissioner board assignments include: New Directions Northwest, Community Connection, NE Oregon Economic Development District, Powder Basin Watershed Council
- St. Elizabeth & CHI Hospital Boards, nine years; St. Elizabeth & CHI Hospital Board Finance Committee Chairman, 11 years
- Clark and Joe Ann Carnes Scholarship Committee, current chairman; awards over \$20,000 annually to Baker High School and North Powder High School graduates entering the medical fields
- James G Tyler Foundation, current Trustee; awards annually to local programs benefitting youth and animals
- Baker City Budget Board; Baker City Golf Club Board
- Baker Rural Fire Protection District Board
- Baker County Cattlemen's Associate Member and Oregon Cattlemen's Association
- Church board member
- Salvation Army local board
- Baker Industries and Resources Corporation, treasurer and board member; 20-plus years; start-up loans, purchase property for resale to enhance future economic development, partnered with other entities as needed to acquire real property for future use. Current businesses and public entities located in Baker City and the surrounding area that benefited from this corporation include OTEC, Natural Structures, Behlen Country, Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Baker City, Baker City Golf Course, and many small businesses in Baker City.

Loran Joseph is running against incumbent Bruce Nichols for a four-year seat on the Baker County Board of Commissioners.

Ballots for the May 19 primary will be mailed Wednesday, April 29. Because there are just two candidates for the office, the one who receives the most

votes in the May 19 election will be elected and take office starting in January 2021, County Clerk Stefanie Kirby said.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THIS SEAT ON THE COUNTY COMMISSION?

I believe the commissioner positions should be about all Baker County citizens, their health and safety (both personal and property), and their right to well-managed, efficient, and transparent county government. I now serve as a Baker County commissioner. The current Board of Commissioners is func-

tioning well. We three commissioners have had some spirited discussions during my first term. The board is operating as it should, with some decisions ending in complete agreement, some ending with a split agreement, and some ending in postponement until a later date. I have worked in the public arena all of

my adult life with significant experience in consulting, budgeting, auditing, and have strong negotiating skills. I respect diverse opinions and believe this helps me make the best possible decisions. This level of experience makes me well-qualified to continue to be a Baker County commissioner.

IF ELECTED, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR TOP THREE PRIORITIES DURING YOUR TENURE?

• Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken precedence over every priority that I have had prior to these troubling times. COVID-19 and its effects on the citizens is my number one priority. This virus has not broken us, nor will it, but it certainly has brought many of us to our knees. There are those who have lost the ability to run their businesses through no fault of their own and it is my goal to see that we help get these people back on their feet again as rapidly as we can. Working with federal, state, and numerous other funding sources, I will continue to gather as much assistance for our citizens as possible. Based on reported science, COVID-19 will be with us for at least another year before a vaccine

will be widely available. Until then, being the amazing, intelligent, yet fragile creatures we are, we will adapt and learn to live with our unwanted companion.

• Another pressing issue is the road closure by local landowners on Lookout Mountain leading down to Snake River Road. This issue is still being reviewed in executive session in consultation with Baker County's attorney so I will not disclose any information other than what is already publicly known. The previous County Court studied and litigated the known facts and issues as needed at that time, whereas, the current Board of Commissioners are attempting to glean the facts from all available records to make a fair and

just decision. I remain hopeful that litigation of the issues may be avoided. My goal was and still is, to settle the case with adequate satisfaction for all parties.

• County park operations and funding is still a major dilemma for the Board of Commissioners. Difficulty in selling land, depressed timber prices, inconsistent water levels in the Snake River impoundments, contractual obligations, and now COVID-19 is causing further losses of revenues making this issue one of my priorities. I will encourage the parks be kept open during the seasons of use. Department equipment and personnel sharing will help alleviate the shortfall in the park budget until other funding can be found.

WHAT ARE YOUR TWO BIGGEST CONCERNS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON THE COUNTY, AND HOW WOULD YOU PROPOSE TO DEAL WITH THOSE?

The coronavirus pandemic has me concerned about the effects on the county in many different ways. I am concerned about our citizens — their health, both physical and mental, families, jobs, and businesses. I am concerned about our nation's declining economic health, which in turn affects Oregon, Baker County, and our citizens. To sum this all up, it's the “domino effect.” As a commissioner, wherever possible, I will help look for opportunities to increase economic activity in our county and region. We

must save every job we can and take advantage of every chance to create more jobs. People who are working and have responsibilities are happier and healthier both mentally and physically.

Though this is not yet the appropriate time to push this too far, it is time to start talking about youth labor laws. Our young people have been denied the possibility to strive for success at a young age when they have the best opportunity to learn how to succeed. I have stated this many times and I will continue to advocate for this much

needed change.

In my view, opportunities will abound after this pandemic is brought under complete control. I will encourage everyone to take advantage of those possibilities and I will work hard to help loosen the restrictions in this state and this county so that we can help lift each other up and make Baker County better than ever before. Baker County's citizens have felt the stress of the virus.

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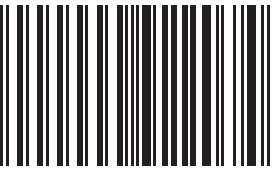
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