

COUNCIL

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“I think absolutely all the budgetary stuff needs to be tabled until after the state revenue forecast on May 20th,” Councilor Doni Bruland said. “Because up until that point, we have no idea how much we’re losing.”

Oregon’s economist will release a state revenue forecast on May 20.

The city receives money from several state sources, including gas, cigarette and liquor taxes.

“I would really hate to put this raise in this year, I think it’s something we should look at a year from now when we’re healthier,” Councilor Lynette Perry said.

Councilor Arvid Andersen agreed.

“I think we need to tap on the brakes and table this request at this time,” Andersen said.

Resident Rusty Little, who also attended the meeting at City Hall, urged councilors to eschew pay raises at a time when many city businesses are closed and hundreds have lost their jobs.

Since March 15 more than 550 Baker County residents have filed for unemployment benefits, according to the Oregon Employment Division. That’s about 10% of the county’s nonfarm workforce. Almost 60% of the county’s residents live in Baker City.

“People are in kind of a really sad state of affairs for money,” Little said. “I think we really need to take a step way back from (pay raises).”

The proposed resolution would make the city’s 15 nonunion workers, including the police and fire chiefs, public works and finance directors and several other supervisors, eligible for 2% raises after 10 and 15 years of consecutive employment at the city, and a 4% raise after 20 years.

Currently, nonunion workers are eligible for a 2% raise after 20 years.

“It is extremely beneficial for the City of Baker City to have long term employees that have institutional knowledge and have shown dedication and loyalty,” Robin Nudd, the city’s human resources manager, wrote in a report to councilors. “In order to recognize these employees,

employers often develop a longevity incentive program.”

Councilors also tabled a proposal to have city staff do a pay equity and salary compensation study for nonunion employees and submit it to the City Council in January 2021.

The city hasn’t changed the salary schedule for nonunion workers since 2014. The schedule includes five yearly step pay increases that employees can earn depending on their performance. The pay hikes are 2% for the first three steps and 4% for the latter two steps.

Employees who reach the top of the salary schedule can potentially earn 2% merit pay increases as well.

Bruland, again citing the state’s May 20 revenue forecast, suggested, and councilors unanimously agreed, to delay budget board meetings until the first week in June.

The city’s fiscal year ends June 30, and the city is required by state law to adopt a budget before then.

In other business Tuesday, the Council:

- Approved a resolution closing the Court Avenue Plaza Wednes-

days from noon to 7 p.m. from June 3 to Oct. 14 for the Baker City Farmers Market.

Nudd said the Farmers Market board has agreed to comply with CDC guidelines related to the coronavirus.

- Heard from City Manager Fred Warner Jr. about the county’s proposal to begin reopening the local economy. The county sent the proposal to the governor’s office April 24.

Warner said city officials will discuss expanding the space on sidewalks around restaurants, and possibly closing sections of some side streets, to allow more outdoor seating and make it easier to follow social distancing.

“The county does believe that we might be able to open the restaurants a little quicker if we offer a larger outdoor seating arrangement for restaurants,” Warner said.

Warner said he will be contacting business owners and bring what he learns to the Council.

- Appointed Jason Bland to the budget board.

OTEC annual meeting set for May 30

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative’s annual meeting on May 30 will take place remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic. The meeting was slated to happen in Baker City.

The virtual meeting will start at 10:30 a.m. Details about how members can participate will be posted at otec.coop/annual-meetingboard-elections later.

Ballots will arrive in the mail in May, and must be returned by May 22.

Candidates on the ballot:

- Baker County, Position 2 — incumbent Aletha Bonebrake running against Tamrya Keller
- Union County, Position 1 — incumbent George Galloway running against Cory Miller
- Harney County, Position 3 — incumbent Robert Cargill running against Laurie Draper.

SERIES FROM LOCAL HISTORIAN GARY DIELMAN EXAMINES 1864 LAND SURVEY OF THE AREA THAT WOULD INCLUDE BAKER CITY

Part 4: Baker City a hub even before it was a city

By Gary Dielman

The 1864 Baker City Township Map shows a total of approximately 16 miles of roads converging on the southern end of Powder River Valley. It’s not surprising that the site seemed to be a much better location for a city than Auburn.

In 1864 Auburn was the seat of county government and the only sizeable settlement in Baker County. Auburn was located in a narrow gulch with no prospect of becoming a major city. In fact, in 1864 it was rapidly losing inhabitants, as nearby placer mines started playing out and many miners headed to new gold strikes in western Idaho.

The 1864 map shows the general route of Powder River flowing from south to north through the township, but with a surprising detour through the east side of future Baker City.

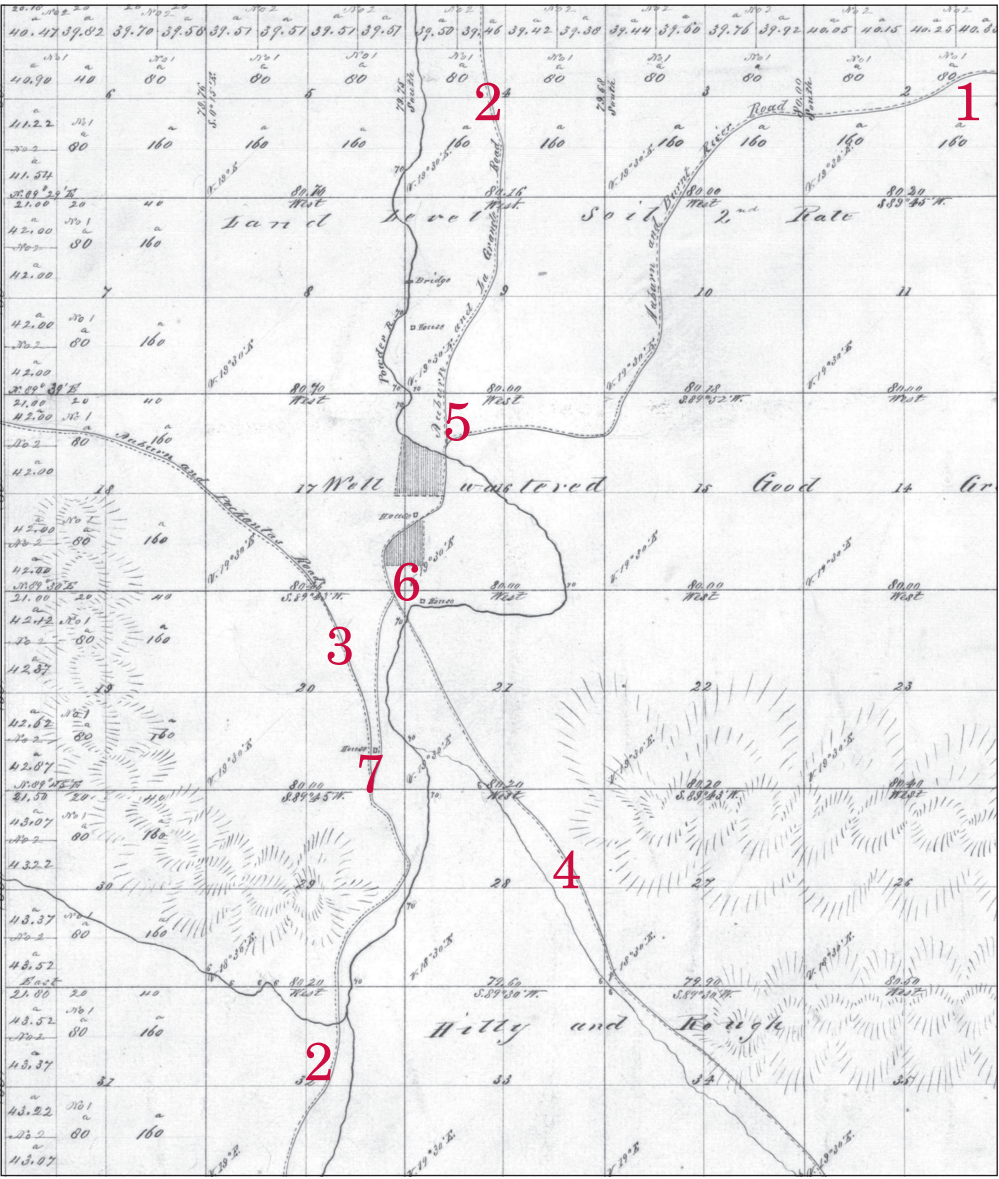
The township map also shows two creeks flowing into Powder River on the south half of the map: Sutton Creek from the east and Griffin Creek from the west. Additionally the surveyors roughly sketched in low hills in the eastern and southwestern portions of the township, and noted on the map several general comments about the terrain: “Hilly and Rough” in the south and east; “Well watered” and “Good Grass” in the middle; and “Land level” and “Soil 2nd Rate” in the north.

The surveyors sketched four roads on the township map and labeled three of them. Below is a list of the four roads and their general location. Further below I describe in detail each road’s route in reference to its location in present Baker City.

- “Auburn and Burnt River Road” — red “1” on the map (5 miles): From the northeast corner of the township to the future site of Baker City and on to Auburn. This road connected to the Emigrant Road about a half mile off the northeast corner of the township.

- “Auburn and La Grande Road” — the red “2s” on the map, one at the top, the other near the bottom (6 miles): From the northern border of the township, to future Baker City, and on out the southern boundary of the township.

- “Auburn and Pocahontas Road” — red “3” on the map



A map that includes the site of Baker City was drawn based on a survey that was done from May 13-18, 1864.

(4½ miles): From the west boundary of the township to the southern part of future Baker City, where it merged with the Auburn and La Grande Road.

- Unlabeled road, which I call “Baker City to Durkee Road” — red “4” on the map (6 miles): From just east of the present site of Baker City Hall, the road went straight southeast out of town. This road is not to be confused with the Auburn and Burnt River Road, although they both end up at Burnt River in Durkee Valley).

Auburn and Burnt River Road

“Burnt River Road” refers to the Emigrant Road, later known as the Oregon Trail, which I-84 generally follows today. Before gold was discovered in 1861, the Emigrant Road was the only road through Baker County, with the exception of a little-used route from the Brownlee Dam area up Powder River, through Eagle Valley, and down into Powder River Valley. The Auburn and Burnt River Road departed from

the Emigrant Road about one half mile off the northeast corner of the 1864 Baker City Township Map. The road entered Baker City Township about where Highway 86 comes off the hill into Powder River Valley. Unlike Highway 86, the road continued west about a half mile north of Highway 86, then angled slightly southwest for about a mile, where it turned sharply south and crossed Highway 86 about 560 feet west of today’s Lindley Lane.

The road continued south slightly east of the three big ponds on Best Frontage Road and crossed today’s H Street about 660 feet east of Best Frontage Road. The road continued south through the field north of the Super 8 Motel, where it turned west, crossed today’s locations of I-84 and Birch Street, continued slightly southwest through the residences between D and E streets, eventually going down D Street north of Leo Adler Field. Near the intersection of D and East streets, the road intersected the Auburn and La Grande Road (see below) coming from

Auburn and La Grande Road

The “Auburn and La Grande Road” coming from Union County via Pyles Canyon entered the north boundary of Baker City Township and continued south following fairly closely the route of the west frontage road of I-84 through the western third of the township. I’ll reference present locations as we travel down the former Auburn and La Grande Road starting at the north boundary of section 4 of the 1864 Baker City Township Map (near the red “2” on the map).

We reach the bottom of section 4 about 280 feet from the northwest corner of the A-Frame RV Park on the west side of the Highway 86 and I-84 interchange. Angling slightly southwest for a mile, the Auburn and La Grande Road crossed H Street at about its intersection with Elm Street. Continuing a quarter mile straight down Elm Street, the Auburn and La Grande Road meets the Auburn and Burnt River

Road coming from the east. That junction — the red “5” on the map — is near the intersection of D and Elm streets north of Leo Adler Field. The two roads then merged going south.

Within a few yards the merged roads cross the old channel of Powder River, which defined the north end of the north farm field shaded in by the surveyors. We’re now at about C Street in the middle of Baker City. The merged roads head due south along the east edge of the field. Within a quarter mile the merged roads cross Campbell Street at the southeast corner of the farm field and head through the middle of Geiser-Pollman Park.

At Madison Street the merged roads went southwest and crossed present Powder River at Baker Street. Then at about Church and Resort the merged roads come to the northeast corner of the south farm field that is almost the shape of a right triangle with the vertical east side along Resort Street. Here the roads skirt southwest along the hypotenuse (west side) of the south field to the southern edge of the field along Court Street. At the southwest corner of the south field, the merged roads go southeast less than a quarter of a mile and cross Auburn Street a little east of Baker City Hall, where there is a Y intersection of dirt roads — red “6” on the map. From there one could go southeast on an unlabeled road, which I call Baker City to Burnt River Road, or one could continue south to Auburn.

If one continues south from the Y junction in front of present Baker City Hall, the road crosses Dewey Avenue at Grace Street and straight south across Myrtle Street west of the Myrtle Street bridge. South of that point the road crossed a bend in present Powder River and immediately crosses the present railroad tracks. From there the road continues south through the residential area of South Baker between Second and Third streets. At Miller Street the road hits the junction of the Auburn and Pocahontas Road — red “7” on the map — where one could continue south to Auburn or turn northwest onto the Auburn and Pocahontas Road.

Auburn and Pocahontas Road

Pocahontas, a village at the foot of the Elkhorn Mountains about eight miles west of Baker City, was founded in 1862 by miners and farmers. From the junction at Miller Street, the Pocahontas Road headed north along Third Street, then northwest crossing Dewey Street just south of the present railroad underpass, crossed the present Union Pacific tracks west of South Baker School, paralleled the tracks on their north side, and crossed Auburn Avenue at about Seventh Street. At about Court Avenue the road crossed over to the west side of the railroad tracks, crossed Campbell Street at 16th Street, and continued northwest out of present Baker City.

Once the traveler reached Pocahontas, which was outside of the west boundary of the 1864 Baker City Township Map, there was a road up Washington Gulch to Auburn.

Back at the Y junction in South Baker, the traveler could go south through the former Oregon Lumber Company property, skirt around the hill south of town following along the west bank of Powder River, cross Griffin Creek about a mile south of Baker City, enter the north end of Bowen Valley, and on south and west to Auburn.

Baker City to Durkee Road

On the 1864 Baker City Township Map, the surveyors did not label the road that branched off from Y junction just east of present Baker City Hall. I refer to it as the Baker City to Durkee Road. From City Hall it followed a southeast course across Dewey Street at Place Street and through the present site of the Federal Building, behind which within a few yards it crossed the old Channel of Powder River. At the present bridge over Estes Street, the road continued southeast through South Baker to Indiana Street east of Elm Street. Another half mile southeast the road headed out of present Baker City approximately along today’s Highway 30 to Durkee.

The series will conclude in the Saturday, May 2, issue with a look at the eastward bend in the Powder River that no longer exists.

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