

Baker City Herald

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January 12, 2021

IN THIS EDITION:

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\$1.50



In **SPORTS**, 5A
Seattle
loses in
playoffs

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Lynn Roehm of Baker City.

Local, 3A

A Baker City man and a Huntington woman were arrested Jan. 5 on felony charges after an Oregon State Police officer stopped them for an alleged traffic violation about 4 p.m.

Trooper Dakotah Keys made the stop on Highway 30 when he noticed a Chevrolet pickup truck that was failing to drive within its lane, he wrote in his daily media log. The driver, who Keys said initially provided a false identity, was later identified as Derrick Lamont Dodge, 42, of Baker City, who had an outstanding Oregon State Parole Board warrant for his arrest.

Local, 3A

Cherie Ward considered tossing the envelope into the trash.

It would have been the most valuable piece of garbage in the sack.

The piece of mail that arrived Saturday, Jan. 9 actually contained a Visa card that was preloaded with the federal pandemic stimulus payment to Cherie and her husband, Bob, who live in Baker City.

Cherie Ward said her initial thought was that the envelope contained a credit card offer.

WEATHER

Today
36 / 35

Snow changing to rain

Wednesday
46 / 20

Rain showers

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

The space below is for a postage label for issues that are mailed.

County seeks to avoid return to extreme risk

By **Jayson Jacoby**
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Mark Bennett references a roller coaster, while Tyler Brown's favored metaphor is the yo-yo, but both are concerned about fluctuating restrictions in Baker County due to the CO-

VID-19 pandemic and the resulting effects on local businesses.

Bennett, a Baker County commissioner and the county's incident commander during the pandemic since its onset 10 months ago, said on Monday, Jan. 11 that it appears the county has

had too many new virus cases over the past two weeks, and potentially too high of a test positivity rate, to remain in the high-risk category.

If the county moves from that category to the extreme-risk level starting Friday, Jan. 15, restaurants,

bars and fitness centers, which had been able to operate at limited capacity since Jan. 1, would have to close or, in the case of restaurants, revert to takeout or outdoor dining.

See **Risk Level** / Page 3A

Donations Help Provide Free Books To Local Students



Contributed Photos

Courtney Benson, of Sunfire Real Estate in Baker City, delivers new children's books that the Baker County Community Literacy Coalition will give away to local students. Sunfire encouraged shoppers to buy books at Betty's Books in Baker City, which offered a 15% discount.



Book Bonanza

By **Lisa Britton**
For the Baker City Herald

Holiday shopping helped boost the book supply for the Baker County Community Literacy Coalition, which gives free books to local students several times a year.

The idea started with Sunfire Real Estate, which encouraged shoppers to buy books for the fundraiser at Betty's Books, which in turn provided a 15% discount.

On Jan. 8, Courtney Benson from Sunfire delivered paperbacks to Jes-

sica Dougherty, who coordinates the BCCLC program.

"They are awesome books," Dougherty said.

The local donations were boosted by two cash contributions: \$100 from Baker Tower, which was matched by Sunfire.

The Baker County Community Literacy Coalition (BCCLC) and REAL (Read Everyday And Learn) programs provide free books to students, as well as volunteers who read with children (which is currently on hold

due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

BCCLC is a nonprofit and relies on grants and donations. The program serves more than 1,500 children in pre-K through sixth grade across 15 schools, social service, and health agencies.

Anyone who would like to make a donation can mail it to the Literacy Program, C/O the Baker Library, 2400 Resort St., Baker City, OR 97814. Or contact Dougherty at momreading4fun@gmail.com or 1-808-640-5900.

4 of 6 new councilors will be sworn in earlier

By **Samantha O'Conner**
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Four of Baker City's six newly elected city councilors will be sworn in this afternoon on the front steps of City Hall, three hours before their first official meeting begins.

The two others are slated to be sworn in during the meeting this evening.

Councilors Johnny Waggoner Sr., Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon and Kerry McQuisten will be sworn in at 4 p.m. on the front steps at City Hall, 1655 First St.

Councilors Heather Sells and Jason Spriet will be sworn in at the start of the Council's regular meeting starting at 7 p.m., also at City Hall.

Spriet is the lone incumbent among the six councilors elected on Nov. 3.

The six will join incumbent Lynette Perry to comprise the seven-member City Council. Perry is in the middle of a four-term term and was not up for reelection.

The four councilors who will be sworn in this afternoon requested that option so their family and friends could attend since it will happen outside.

See **Council** / Page 3A

County extends visitor services contract again

By **Samantha O'Conner** and **Jayson Jacoby**
Baker City Herald

Baker County Commissioners voted on Wednesday, Jan. 6, to extend until April 30 the county's contract with the Baker County Chamber of Commerce to operate the visitors center at 480 Campbell St.

Commissioners originally planned to award a six-year contract in February 2020.

The county received two bids for the contract, which pays about \$77,000 per year, the money coming from lodging taxes paid by guests at motels, bed and breakfasts, vacation rental

homes and other establishments.

The Chamber of Commerce submitted a proposal, as did Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort.

Both the county's Transient Lodging Tax Committee and its Economic Development Committee recommended commissioners award the contract to Anthony Lakes.

But commissioners decided in February 2020 to postpone its decision.

Shelly Cutler, the Chamber's executive director, said at the time that if the Chamber lost the contract, the organization might not

be able to put on Miners Jubilee and other events.

(Miners Jubilee was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

In mid-November, commissioners decided to restart the process and have the county's attorney, Drew Martin, write a new request for proposals for the visitor services contract.

Commissioners did not set a timeline for finishing the request for proposals (RFP).

In a Jan. 9 email to Commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols, Peter Johnson, general manager at Anthony Lakes, called on the commissioners to "simply fol-

low through and release the new RFP as recommended by County legal counsel and as stated in County bylaws."

Johnson noted in his email that although county bylaws state that the visitor services contract is to be awarded every six years, the current contract with the Chamber of Commerce has been extended.

"We do have some concerns on how ethical that is," Johnson wrote.

He wrote that outdoor recreation has increased substantially during the pandemic, and that "we would hate to see Baker County, a key regional player in tour-

ism, miss out on the influx of travelers because the commissioners aren't able to make a decision or move forward with the new RFP."

In a response to Johnson's email, Nichols wrote on Jan. 9 that "We have been thinking hard about trying to speed the process up with little success until this past week. We do recognize that time is short and has a way of slipping by before we realize it. Thanks for the reminder. It seems that we're all thinking along the same lines. We'll keep you informed ..."

See **Visitors** / Page 3A



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THURSDAY — GO! MAGAZINE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE