

Baker City Herald

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In BUSINESS, 1B

Travel plaza opens at Farewell Bend

IN THIS EDITION: Local • Business & AgLife • Go! magazine \$1.50

QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Robin Crowell of Baker City.

State, 3A

ONTARIO — U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz met behind closed doors with his Republican colleagues in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6 as President Trump implored Congress to overturn the presidential election.

They huddled to consider the case for dismissing millions of American votes. Making that case would give Trump the second term that he falsely claimed he won.

In the coming hours, Bentz, R-Oregon, would lock down in his congressional office as marauders a block away vandalized the Capitol. Secured with his staff, he parsed legal issues on voting in six states in question.

BRIEFING

Beef raffle fundraiser for Baker High seniors

Raffle tickets for a chance to win one of six beef quarters, cut and wrapped, are available online as a fundraiser for the Baker High School senior class alcohol- and drug-free party. Tickets are \$10 each or three for \$20. Winners will be announced Feb. 1. Tickets can be bought at www.bhsseniorclass.com

WEATHER

Today

37 / 21

Sunny

Friday

38 / 21

A few rain showers

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

McQuisten elected mayor

By Samantha O’Conner
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Kerry McQuisten is Baker City’s new mayor.

City councilors, who choose the mayor from among their colleagues, elected McQuisten by a 6-1 vote Tuesday night at City Hall. Councilor Lynette Perry nominated McQuisten.

Councilor Heather Sells voted for Shane Alderson. Both Sells and Alderson are, like McQuisten, new councilors who were elected Nov. 3.

“I feel humbled by the confidence voters and then the other elected councilors have shown in me,” McQuisten said. “I’m also grateful for the chance to do some good in the community as mayor. My hope is that more citizens will turn out and start making their voices heard. I think the new city manager and council will bring some positive new changes, which is exciting.”

See Council / Page 5A

McQuisten



Almost 400 Baker County Residents Have Received COVID-19 Vaccine



Verla Boles was the first resident at Meadowbrook Place assisted living community in Baker City to receive a COVID-19 vaccine on Friday, Jan. 8. Boles and 42 other residents were inoculated that day.

Contributed Photo

County will return to extreme category

■ Restaurants will be limited to takeout meals from Jan. 15 to Jan. 28

By Jayson Jacoby
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Baker County’s respite from Oregon’s most extreme COVID-19 restrictions will last just two weeks.

The county, which moved from the extreme-risk category to the high-risk on Jan. 1, will return to the extreme designation on Friday, Jan. 15, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced on Tuesday, Jan. 12.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett said Tuesday he was disappointed.

“I thought I could lobby our way out of extreme,” said Bennett, who has served as the county’s incident commander during the pandemic. “We’re not happy. It’s not what we wanted.”

Restaurant owner Tyler Brown shares Bennett’s dismay.

Brown owns Barley Brown’s Brew Pub and Tap House, and his family also owns Sumpter Junction restaurant, all in Baker City.

Sumpter Junction has been closed since March because the layout of its booths makes it unfeasible to operate even with limited indoor dining.

But Brown said his pub has been open for indoor dining — albeit with a limit of 50 people, including staff and customers — since Baker County dropped to the high-risk category.

See Extreme / Page 6A

Brown



Bennett



Speeding Shots

By Jayson Jacoby
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The number of Baker County residents who have received their first of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine has nearly doubled over the past week.

The roster of residents who have had both inoculations also is rising.

The county had its busiest day on Friday, Jan. 8, when 140 doses were administered, including 53 at Meadowbrook Place assisted living community in Baker City.

As of Wednesday, Jan. 13, a total of 390 people had been vaccinated. That includes 31 residents who have received both doses, and 359 who have had their first shot of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, according to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

See Vaccine / Page 3A

Vaccination Priority Expands To People 65 and older Jan. 23

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced Tuesday that the state will begin offering COVID-19 vaccinations to all people 65 and older, as well as teachers, starting Jan. 23. See more on Page 3A.

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES HAVE LIMITED PRACTICES, HOPE TO START GAMES IN MARCH

Bulldogs happy to be back on the court

By Corey Kirk
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Walking into the Baker High School gymnasium on the fourth day of 2021, Buell Gonzales Jr. heard something he hadn’t heard in months.

Gonzales, the Baker School District’s athletic director, smiled as he heard the squeak of shoes on hardwood and the echoes of voices as BHS boys and girls basketball players practiced.

“There are just so many moving pieces that sometimes you just have to sit back and enjoy how far you’ve come,” Gonzales said on Friday, Jan. 8. “It has been so much negative for so long, so to get back in was something really positive. It was good to walk into the gym, to see them in there, laughing, having a good time.”

— Buell Gonzales Jr., Baker School District athletic director, talking about watching Baker High School basketball teams practice Jan. 4

ing, having a good time, enjoying each other’s company and competing.”

After being in the state’s extreme-risk category for COVID-19 spread from Dec. 3-31, Baker County dropped to the high-risk level on Jan. 1.

That meant high school athletes were able to return to campus for practice, as long as they maintained social distancing and wore masks.

“When we got out of the extreme (level), it opened up the facilities, it’s just been super nice,” Gonzales said, “Coaches got in there, and started doing workouts, that was nice.”

Among those coaches was Jebron Jones, BHS boys varsity head coach.

“I think a lot of these guys and girls just missed being around each other, whatever sport it is, just their friendship that is hard to sustain via text or Instagram or anything like that,” Jones said.

Basketball and the other traditional winter sports, wrestling and swimming, started a month-long “mini-session” on Nov. 17, but that was canceled almost immediately when Gov. Kate Brown ordered a statewide “freeze” from Nov. 18 to Dec. 2 designed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The freeze was replaced with the current risk level system.

Mat Sand, BHS girls varsity head coach, said the mini-session’s end added to a series of disappointments that started in early March when the onset of the pandemic canceled the Class 4A girls state tournament and prevented Sand’s team from defending its 2019 state championship.

“It was extremely disappointing,” Sand said on Tuesday, Jan. 12. “I understand the circumstances and situations are all out of a lot of people’s controls, I was just more discouraged getting things going and then being shut off.”

See Bulldogs / Page 6A