

COUNCIL

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“Each business would be free to determine the most effective way to keep their unique customer population happy, healthy, stress-free, and contributing to our local economy,” the Blacks wrote.

There is no clear legal route for the city to pass a resolution that supersedes COVID-19 rules from the state.

Mayor Kerry McQuisten told councilors that the city had received 23 letters in support of the Blacks’ idea, four from people opposed, and one letter from a resident who urged the city to be cautious.

Councilors heard from several residents during Tuesday’s meeting, as well as from Whitney Black.

She told councilors that “the constantly shifting state suggestions, mandates, and threats just put a permanent stress on our little town. I think we’ve all felt it, whether you own a business, run a business, work with a business, shop at a business, it’s been pretty bad mentally, physically, it just hasn’t worked.”

Noodle Perkins, whose wife, Theresa, owns the Little Pig Drive In, called the Blacks’ sanctuary city concept a “great idea.”

“If Portland can do it, why can’t we do it?” Noodle Perkins said. “I hear people that don’t agree with it, I understand.”

But he said that if the city can do something “to stop the cities, the larger populations, from voting in what we need to do and how we need to live our lives, that’s what we need to do.”

Beverly Calder, owner of BELLA Main Street Market, read from a letter she also submitted to the City Council.

Calder said it is “imperative to allow the mask recommendations to stand in order that we can continue to offer the best Shop Local in Baker

City experience that we are able to.”

“Please allow employees in Baker City to do their jobs — please don’t saddle them with enforcing rules that could vary business to business and block by block,” Calder said. “It would be both confusing for visitors, frustrating and possibly dangerous to our local citizens. I implore you to keep employees in Baker City safe by recognizing the Oregon Health Authority mask requirement.”

Jimm Mooney, who runs Veterans Hope Ministries in Baker City, said he agreed with Calder, to an extent. He said he’s concerned that businesses that don’t comply with state and federal requirements could lose their licenses or face other sanctions.

“There’s a number of businesses here that are impacted by OHA, the Food and Drug, OLCC, Department of Agriculture, for licenses many times they have to pay tens of thousands of dollars to maintain business and if they violate the mandates, guess what? They could lose those licenses permanently,” Mooney said.

Dave McGuire, co-owner of the Oregon Trail Restaurant, said that although he’s not opposed to the idea of a sanctuary resolution, he doesn’t believe it would work because the city can’t protect business owners from government regulators.

Dylan Glock, who owns the Squeaky Stirrup in Baker City, told councilors he’s talked to people who are traveling to Idaho for supplies because they don’t want to wear a mask in a business, as Oregon requires.

“90% of people think it’s dumb,” Glock said.

Tom Hughes of Baker City told councilors he supports the Blacks’ suggestion for a sanctuary resolution, and he said the city needs to help small businesses.

He also expressed concern about restrictions during the pandemic contributing to a rising suicide rate.

“The measures are unprecedented,” Hughes said. “It’s just ridiculous. We’ve got to have common sense, put our heads together, both sides, come up with common sense that fits all.”

Jerry Shaw, owner of the Inland Cafe and Country Financial insurance, also agreed with the Blacks’ proposal, but he urged councilors, if they take action, to specify that the city can’t protect businesses from OSHA and other regulatory agencies.

“I urge you to do something but I urge you to be cautious of what you do,” Shaw said.

Railroad quiet zone update

Public Works Director Michelle Owen told councilors that a previous City Council had asked city staff to pursue a Notice of Intent (NOI), a first step toward possibly seeking a quiet zone that would prohibit Union Pacific locomotives from sounding their horns except in emergencies.

An average of about 24 trains per day roll through Baker City. Federal rules require trains to sound their whistle within a quarter mile of crossings.

In November 2019 the City Council voted to authorize the city to prepare an NOI, the preparatory step to filing an application for a quiet zone.

A local group, Neighbors for a Safer, Quieter and Healthier Baker City, made a proposal to the City Council in November 2019 and presented a petition signed by more than 230 residents who support a quiet zone.

The application is free, and it doesn’t obligate the city to take any action. However, in a report to councilors, Owen wrote that preparing an application “would require many hours of staff and consultant time to develop.”

Owen also wrote that La Grande last year had a quiet zone approved, after spending about \$200,000 to make changes to five

railroad crossings to increase safety.

McQuisten pointed out that when city voters were asked about a quiet zone in the past, they were largely opposed.

In May 2002, voters rejected by a margin of 82% to 18% a proposal for the city to pursue a quiet zone designation.

McQuisten questioned how the City Council in 2019 “went against the will of the people and gave permission for a special interest group to go forward with this.”

Owen noted that in 2002 the proposal was based on the idea of the city paying for required upgrades to railroad crossings, while the current concept would potentially include private financial contributions.

Owen also noted that the group supporting a quiet zone has talked about how train whistles can affect the ability of students to learn at South Baker Intermediate, which is near the tracks.

Councilor Lynette Perry suggested the city solicit opinions from Baker School District officials about the quiet zone idea. (The Baker School Board gave its support to the movement to establish a quiet zone in Baker City in October 2019.)

Committee appointments

Councilors discussed the process for appointing volunteers to city boards and commissions.

In the past the Council usually voted on appointing members from a list of applicants. However, the city charter states that “The mayor shall appoint the various committees provided for under the rules of the council or otherwise and shall fill all vacancies in committees of the council from that body.”

Based on that, McQuisten appointed Charlie Williams and Jerry Shaw to the Golf Board, Brett Hoffman to the Tree Board, Teresa McQuisten (no

relation to the mayor) to the Historic District Design Review Commission, and Keith Magnuson and Shelly Cutler to the Public Works Advisory Committee.

Fred Warner Jr., the former city manager who retired Dec. 31, also applied for one of the two vacancies on the Golf Board.

Councilor Heather Sells recommended that McQuisten consider appointing Warner based on his experience.

McQuisten, in response to Sells, said she “would prefer not to have that applicant appointed,” meaning Warner, the one applicant she didn’t appoint.

Councilor Jason Spriet then asked McQuisten to “explain her reasoning” for opposing Warner serving on the Golf Board.

McQuisten, referring to Warner although again not by name, said she felt he had “expressed difficulty with working with the current mayor and current council and I would prefer not to have that kind of strife brought back into the city.”

Spriet then asked McQuisten what she meant by strife, saying “that’s new information to me.”

McQuisten said she had walked past “the gentleman three times in City Hall and so have other council members and he will refuse to even greet us. That’s an issue. I would prefer not to have someone with that sort of animosity toward current council in a position here.”

Spriet then asked McQuisten whether she felt that “affected his ability to be on the board.”

“Absolutely,” McQuisten replied.

Spriet said “it sounds to me without further information it’s more of an emotional response than actually looking at what the golf course needs are, given Mr. Warner’s history, contacts that he has for grants, he promotes the golf course. I think he would be a fairly strong advocate for the golf course for those reasons.”

News of Record

DEATHS

Sandra Fuss: 77, of Baker City, died on Feb. 8, 2021, at her home, surrounded by her family. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami’s Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences can be made at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com

FUNERALS PENDING

Lloyd Harry Bigler: A military honors ceremony will take place at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 20, at Union Park. Those attending must wear a mask and practice social distancing. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions to the Union VFW Post, 518 N. Main St., Union, OR 97883. Online condolences may be made at www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police Arrests, citations
DRIVING WHILE OPERATOR’S LICENSE SUSPENDED (misdemeanor): Ethan DeLong, 30, of 805 W. Fairway Drive, 8:21 a.m. Monday, at Washington Avenue and Sixth Street; cited and released.

SECOND-DEGREE THEFT: Kyle Ryan Bork, 21, of Baker City, 5:15 p.m. Tuesday, at D&B Supply, 3515 Pocahontas Road; cited and released; police said employees at the store recovered miscellaneous items valued at \$109.95 that Bork had taken from the store without paying for them.

Crime reports
FIRST-DEGREE THEFT: In the 2600 block of Fourth Street between noon Sunday, Feb. 7,

and noon Monday, Feb. 8; Carl Heath of Baker City reported that his pickup truck was entered and a .32-caliber semiautomatic handgun taken.

SECOND-DEGREE BURGLARY: At 2005 Washington Avenue between 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, and 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7; Heidi Dalton of Baker City reported that the building was entered and a Chromebook, a computer charger and a WiFi Hotspot box with a total value of \$500 was taken.

SECOND-DEGREE BURGLARY: In the 1900 block of Sixth Street about 4 p.m. Tuesday; a burglary was reported at a work trailer parked on Sixth Street belonging to Ethan DeLong of Baker City.

Baker County Sheriff’s Office Arrests, citations
FAILURE TO PERFORM DUTIES OF A DRIVER INVOLVED IN AN ACCIDENT (Baker County Justice Court warrant): Bobby Jean Copley, 88, of Baker City, 1:35 p.m. Tuesday, at the Sheriff’s Office; cited and released.

Oregon State Police Arrests, citations
GIVING FALSE INFORMATION TO POLICE: Joshua A. Escarsega, 30, of Boise, 8:02 a.m. Friday, Feb. 5, on Interstate 84, about 5 miles south of Huntington; Sr. Trooper Andrew McClay wrote in his daily media log that Escarsega had rolled his vehicle off the highway and was trying to get it back on the road. McClay said Escarsega gave him a false name and was issued a criminal citation for that crime; Escarsega also was cited on charges of no operator’s license and failure to

carry insurance. The driver also was found to have had an extraditable warrant out of Idaho, but because the Baker County Jail did not accept Escarsega because of its protocol under COVID-19, McClay said he cited and released Escarsega on the warrant charge as well. McClay ordered Escarsega’s vehicle towed and impounded.

POSSESSION OF A WEAPON BY A FELON: Tom R. Carroll, 37, of Baker City, 2:29 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, at Highway 30 and Indiana Avenue; cited and released. Trooper Dakota Keys stated in his daily media log that when he stopped Carroll for an alleged traffic violation he learned that Carroll allegedly was in violation of his probation. Keys wrote that Carroll consented to a search of his vehicle during which Keys found a restricted weapon.

DELIVERY OF METHAMPHETAMINE AND POSSESSION OF METHAMPHETAMINE (2 grams or more): George Stephen Palmer, 41, of Ontario, 2:24 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, at Highway 7 and David Eccles Road; cited and released. Trooper Dakota Keys wrote in his daily media log that Palmer was stopped on a charge of failing to obey a traffic control device and the officer developed reasonable suspicion of the crime of possession of a controlled substance. The Baker City Police Department deployed its K-9 team of Sgt. Wayne Chastain and drug-detection dog Capa. The dog alerted positive for drugs on Palmer’s vehicle, Keys stated. Keys detained Palmer and in a search of his vehicle, police found a criminal amount of methamphetamine and items used for drug delivery, Keys stated.

EOU waives application fees

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University’s Admissions Office announced recently that it would waive all application fees from Saturday, Feb. 13, to March 15.

The decision applies to all student types and modalities intending to start at EOU in fall 2021. Applicants for graduate

programs, undergraduate programs, online and on-campus can save up to \$50 by submitting their application during this period. Although the university’s application deadline isn’t until September, students should apply as soon as possible if they hope to earn merit-based scholarships.



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• 1/2" water treatment, 1/2"
• Action: 180° 99



\$34⁹⁹
Kitchen Faucet
• Chrome
• Action: 180° 99



\$99⁹⁹
Prelude Round Front Toilet
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• 1.6 GPF, dual flush, dual
• Action: 180° 99



\$16⁹⁹
6-Spray Showerhead
• 1.6 GPF
• Action: 180° 99



\$24⁹⁹
2-Handle Bathroom Faucet
• Chrome
• Action: 180° 99



\$49⁹⁹
1/2 HP Garbage Disposal
• Stainless steel, action
• Action: 180° 99



\$16⁹⁹
Water Heater
• 1/2 HP, action
• Action: 180° 99



\$16⁹⁹
Elextra 1.5" PVC Cutter
• Action: 180° 99



\$16⁹⁹
Water Heater
• 1/2 HP, action
• Action: 180° 99



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