

## RISK

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To qualify for the lowest level, the county needs to have fewer than 30 cases during the two weeks, and a positive test rate below 5%.

Baker County's numbers for the most recent period — Feb. 21 through March 6 — were 44 new cases and a positivity rate of 6.3%.

The county actually reported 45 new cases, but one of those is an inmate at Powder River Correctional Facility, and state officials don't count such cases if doing so would push a county into a higher risk level.

That would have happened had the Powder River case been included in the county's official total — the threshold for the high-risk category is 45 new cases.

County Commissioner Mark Bennett said that although it's unfortunate the county's risk level is rising to moderate, "we're grateful the moderate risk rating will not affect our schools, restaurants and bars, and gyms to a large extent. It will impact our businesses if our risk level rises again in two weeks."

"I ask everyone to take notice of where we are, and to keep doing the good things you're doing to limit the spread," Bennett said. "Our Health Department is steadily getting vaccines to those who want one when we receive them. Unfortunately, in the last week we also had three COVID-19-related deaths of county residents. We're a ways off from being out of the woods, and there is a lot we can continue to do to take care of each other."

Although the county's case counts have risen the past two weeks or so, they remain well below the numbers from November, December and the first half of January.

The county had 141 cases during November, 196 in December — the highest monthly total during the

pandemic — and 106 in January. February's total was 70 cases, and for the first nine days of March there were 21 cases.

The difference in restrictions on businesses and activities between the lowest and moderate categories is less severe than between moderate and high risk.

For restaurants and bars, the limit on indoor dining in moderate-risk counties is 50% of capacity or 100 total people, whichever is fewer. In counties at the lowest risk, the limit is 50% of capacity only, with no restriction on total people.

The situation starting Friday is the same for gyms and fitness centers, theaters and museums — a limit of 50% of capacity or 100 people, whichever is fewer.

The limits on outdoor recreation events, including sports, drops from 300 people under the lowest risk to 150 under moderate risk.

Tyler Brown, who owns Barley Brown's Brew Pub and Tap House in Baker City, said the change in indoor dining limits won't affect his businesses because at 50% capacity there are fewer than 100 people.

Indoor tables are limited to six diners for moderate risk, compared with eight diners for lowest risk, but Brown said that also isn't a big problem because most of his tables are set up for no more than six customers.

Justin Long, who owns the Sumpter Nugget restaurant, said the new restrictions that take effect Friday won't affect his business either.

Brown said he has been tracking case counts and he was concerned about the possibility that the county would move into either the high or extreme level.

For counties at high risk, the limit on indoor dining is 25% of capacity or 50 total people, and at the extreme risk indoor dining is prohibited.

# Former city councilor asks current councilors to be respectful to all

By Samantha O'Conner  
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Former Baker City councilor Beverly Calder attended Tuesday's City Council meeting and criticized both statements and social media posts that some councilors have made recently.

Calder, who described some online statements as "repulsive," pointed out that the city charter requires that "all elections for city office must be nonpartisan."

"As council, you represent the 10,000 plus citizens in Baker City," Calder said. "This is important to remember and respect in all of your actions and all of your words as a councilor."

Calder noted that per the charter, the mayor is tasked with enforcing all council rules, including one, revised in April 2020, that states all councilors "shall accord the utmost courtesy" to each other, city employees, and the public.

She contends that hasn't

been happening recently.

"In the past 30 days, we have seen a lack of civility," Calder said. "We have witnessed violations of these rules. We have heard malicious statements made against public servants, volunteers, and leaders in our community."

"Many of the statements have been made without 'naming names' but in a community as small as ours, the objects are often obvious," Calder said. "Each of the people maligned have given much to our community and deserve, at a minimum, the respect of the council and a civil manner."

Calder contends that Mayor Kerry McQuisten "impugned" the character of former city manager Fred Warner Jr., who applied to serve on the city's golf board.

During the Council's Feb. 9 meeting, when councilors were discussing appointments to various boards, McQuisten,

referring to Warner though not by name, said she felt Warner 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."

Calder also said a councilor "posted an online statement that maligned both the elected members of the county commission and appointed committee volunteers that serve the county."

She cited another Facebook post, which included obscenities, that McQuisten had "liked."

"I ask that the council recognize that the words of one reflect the word of the council as a whole," Calder said. "The charter and rules of procedure clearly state the manner expected. It should be the desire of the council as a whole to lift our community and to encourage participation by treating each other and all other members of our

community with civility."

McQuisten wrote in a message to the Herald that "Ms. Calder seemed to be saying that she'd been monitoring multiple councilors' past, private social media posts somewhere. She was outraged that she'd seen me 'like' a post that she didn't like, so that was a head-scratcher. She also indicated some opinions she disagreed with on Facebook, even though it sounded, from what I could decipher, as if they weren't mine or that of any councilor, somehow violated City Charter. That's ludicrous. All I can say is thank God for our First Amendment rights."

McQuisten said she has started a public Facebook page — "Mayor Kerry McQuisten" — and "that also seems to have shaken up the status quo. I have zero plans to remove that page; the feedback from it has been overwhelmingly positive."

## COVID

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In a press release Tuesday, Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, said, "The Health Department offers our condolences for their family and friends, we are so sorry for your

loss. This leaves a big impact on our small community."

The woman was the third Baker County resident to die after contracting COVID-19 in the past two weeks.

Two county residents — an 87-year-old woman and an 88-year-old man — died on Feb. 26, two days after testing positive.

Both had underlying conditions, according to the OHA.

The county's other deaths: a 59-year-old man who died Feb. 2; an 86-year-old man on Jan. 30; an 85-year-old man on Dec. 21; a 95-year-old man on Nov. 26; an 83-year-old man on Oct. 19; a 90-year-old man on Aug. 21; an 82-year-old woman on Aug. 16.

## DISEASE

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However, Liby said those who have a positive history of the cancer in his or her family should consider a screening at a younger age.

"They are seeing colon cancer in younger people and we're not really sure why," he said.

He said that only about 50% of the population gets a colonoscopy.

"There's a huge portion of the

"There's a huge portion of the population avoiding this, and it's a preventable cancer."

— Dr. Christopher Liby

population avoiding this, and it's a preventable cancer," he said.

It's that other 50% that worries him.

"How do you capture the 50% who don't want to get it done?" he said.

Scheduling a colonoscopy depends on an individual's insurance — some may require a referral from a primary care physician.

As for the procedure itself, it is outpatient and takes about 40 minutes or less. The patient is sedated throughout

the colonoscopy.

Of all stages of colon cancer, the ACS reports a 63% 5-year survival rate. For a localized stage (the cancer hasn't spread), the 5-year survival rate is 91%.

The ACS reports that the incidence of colorectal cancer has dropped since the mid-1980s due to more people getting screened.

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