



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Kids enjoy a sunny but blustery Monday, April 19 at Geiser-Pollman Park.

CAMERAS

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"There is an app for the law enforcement to use; they can monitor those cameras on their phones," Waggoner said. "They will be able to go back and see where people were, who was doing what. Maybe we can not have so much destruction to the pavilions and carvings on the picnic tables, and playground equipment torn up."

Police Chief Ray Duman told councilors that police officers are installing the app on their phones.

Waggoner said the cameras were set up to cover the entire parks.

The city received a grant of \$18,745 from the Leo Adler



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

One of the six security cameras at Geiser-Pollman Park.

Foundation to help pay for the cameras, Bornstedt said.

The city's total cost, including installing electric lines and

poles, was \$36,319.

Waggoner said the city could potentially install cameras in the future along the

Leo Adler Memorial Parkway, the paved path that follows the Powder River through much of Baker City.

In addition to installing the security cameras, Bornstedt said the parks department is also working to remove aging trees that pose a safety hazard.

"Our trees are aging, especially in Geiser-Pollman Park, and we just had a couple that were rotten from the center," Bornstedt said. "One in particular was in close proximity to the playground, so it had to come out. The other, the tree board hasn't consented to removal yet. So, we'll just keep evaluating until at some point in time it'll have to come out as well."

ELECTION

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The bond measure would also all the district to:

- Construct an approximately 5,000-square-foot multipurpose building at Baker Middle School for use as a cafeteria/kitchen.
- Replace the roof at South Baker Intermediate.

If voters approve the measure, it would increase property taxes within the school district over five years by 66 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. That equates to \$66 more per year on a home assessed at \$100,000.

Also on the May 18 ballot:

- Baker School Board

has two positions. Koby Myer and Jessica Dougherty are vying for one position, and Travis Cook is running unopposed for the other.

- Five-year renewal for the Baker County Library District's local option, general operations levy. The levy, which would not increase property taxes, amounts to about 24.9 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Voters approved the last five-year extension, in 2016, by a margin of 83% to 17%.

- Measure, for Halfway voters only, to allow marijuana businesses, including dispensaries, in the town. In 2016 Halfway voters, by a margin of 10 votes, decided to ban marijuana dispensaries.

STUDENTS

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Baker High School

- Neah Thomas is state champion in social systems for her project studying the effects on people's stress level using equine therapy. She collected data such as blood pressure and heart rate of people after they interacted with horses.

- Skye Smith is state champion in animal systems (division 3) for her experiment on whether horses have taste preferences, using treats.

- Weston Bryant and Dillon Multop are state champions in animal systems (division 4) for their study of the effects of different colored lights on the behavior of fish.

- Kylie Siddoway is state champion for her job interview performance.

- Jocelynn Hellberg won the HH Gibson scholarship.

These students earned their state FFA degree: Emma Baeth, Iriana Rosales, Katie Wilde, Majestic Grove, Thomas Lyon, Zack Morrison, Lacy Churchfield.



Smith



Thomas



Siddoway

Group hopes to have visitor services proposal by July

By Samantha O'Conner
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The work group reviewing Baker County's lodging tax system hopes to have a draft request for proposals for the visitor services contract — the issue that prompted the group's formation in March — for public review by early July.

The six-member group met on Wednesday, April 14.

Bill Harvey, chairman of the Baker County Board of Commissioners and one of the county's three representatives on the work group, said early July is the tentative goal for finishing the request for proposals.

County commissioners voted on March 3 to propose the work group to the city.

Commissioners also voted to extend the current visitor services contract, with the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, through Aug. 31.

Commissioners had intended to award a new contract in February 2020. The county received two proposals, from the Chamber of Commerce and from Anthony Lakes.

Although the county's Lodging Tax Committee and Economic Development Committee both recommended commissioners award the

contract to Anthony Lakes, commissioners decided to delay awarding the contract.

Then, in the fall of 2020, commissioners decided to restart the process and create a new request for proposals (RFP).

The city/county work group was tasked with drafting that proposal as well as considering other potential changes to the lodging tax system that's been in place since 2006.

Guests at motels, bed and breakfasts, RV parks, vacation rental homes, campgrounds and other lodging establishments pay a 7% tax. The tax is collected in Baker City, some other incorporated cities, including Halfway and Sumpter, and in unincorporated parts of the county. The tax generated about \$440,000 in the most recent fiscal year.

Baker City manager Jon Cannon, one of the city's three members on the work group, said the group has been discussing visitor services, tourism marketing and event coordination.

The current lodging tax ordinance requires that 70% of the tax revenue be spent for tourism promotion and 25% for economic development. The county, which oversees the tax

program, can keep up to 5% for administrative costs.

"We already have a contract in place for marketing," Cannon said (with Timothy Bishop). "I think if we write up a good RFP for event coordination and visitors services, and then we kind of look at the mix of our TLT committee to make sure that everybody in the county and city is well represented, and then kind of put it back into play from there, I think that simplifies the structure a lot and addresses the things that our TLT ordinance says it wants us to do as well as our strategic plan wants us to do."

Cannon's reference to the TLT committee has to do with potential changes to its membership.

Now, the seven-member committee includes one lodging establishment operator, a city official appointed by the Baker City Council, a member appointed by the economic Development Committee, and four at-large members.

"I think it's important you have a cross section of the right folks within those industries and different types of folks that are affected by TLT," said Martin Arritola, chairman of the Economic Development Committee and one of the county's three representatives on the work group.

"We just want willing bodies, number one, hopefully in the same category that we're trying to fill. And that doesn't always happen," Harvey said.

A possible change the work group discussed would have the Baker City Council appoint three members:

- A lodging business owner or representative
- a tourism industry representative
- a city official

"If we got a downtown business that wants to join the committee and we don't have a slot with one of these other businesses then we could do that," said Joanna Dixon, a Baker City Council member and one of the city's three members on the work group.

The County Commissioners would appoint four members:

- A lodging business owner or representative
- a member of the Economic Development Committee
- a restaurant owner or representative
- an at-large member

Jason Brandt, president of the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, has been participating by phone with the work group dur-

ing its meetings.

Brandt said that ideally, a majority of the lodging tax committee members will be in positions where they see firsthand the results of the work that's done with tax revenue, including tourism marketing and event coordination.

In addition to the RFP for visitor services, the work group is discussing a separate request for proposals for a person who would operate what Harvey described as an "event clearinghouse."

The contractor could help organizers coordinate their events to avoid conflicts.

Cannon said it would be helpful to have a person responsible for helping with events.

"It also makes it easy for if someone calls City Hall and says, 'hey, I have this great idea for a golf tournament,' I can say 'You know what, you need to call this person and they'll tell when the weekends are available,' that's how I see it," Cannon said.

Harvey said the event coordination contractor also would be asked to help volunteers get events started.

The position would not be a year-round position the first year but could develop into one.

Advocates call Snake River prison court order a landmark

■ Multnomah County Circuit Judge Amy Baggio ruled that the Ontario prison failed to comply with face mask requirements

By Liliana Frankel
Malheur Enterprise

ONTARIO — Lawyers and advocates say that the sweeping court order requiring reforms in Snake River Correctional Institution's COVID protocols is a landmark. The case, they say, not only raised questions about the quality of medical care at the prison but also exposes problems endemic to the Oregon Department of Corrections' handling of the pandemic.

"It's an extensive, expansive order on the issue of masking, and really hopeful," said Tara Herivel, coordinating attorney of the Oregon Habeas Strike Force.

Herivel's organization has handled over 400 civil lawsuits alleging that the Oregon Department of Corrections

has left vulnerable prisoners in unconstitutional conditions during COVID. Sixteen lawsuits involved SRCI.

Less than 10 COVID-related habeas corpus cases have made it to trial so far due to the backlog in the courts. In cases where judges have ruled, most have ordered relief for a particular inmate, but "most judges have not wanted to touch the COVID claims," Herivel said.

Multnomah Circuit Judge Amy Baggio ruled that the Ontario prison's masking compliance has been inadequate and "creates an unjustifiable risk" throughout the prison.

She ordered prison officials to document "how SRCI is enforcing the masking policy, including proof of specific enforcement; (and) consider-

ation of a plan to engage in mass COVID-19 testing at SRCI, particularly rapid testing of staff prior to entry."

Jennifer Black, communications manager for the Oregon Department of Corrections, declined to answer specific questions from the Enterprise. She said that to do so would run "the risk of preempting the court's decision-making process" regarding the "detailed report" that SRCI must submit to Baggio by the end of April.

The findings by Baggio conflict with what prison officials have been telling the public for months.

Last September, for example, prison officials suggested corrections workers and inmates — referred to by the agency as adults in

custody — were following COVID orders.

"We continue to require employees and (AICs) to wear masks when social distancing is not possible, as well as requiring employees to be screened prior to entry into the facility," Amber Campbell, public information officer for SRCI, said in a Sept. 22 email to the Enterprise.

But the report of a Feb. 6 inspection at the prison, submitted to the judge, showed that only 80% of staff at SRCI was wearing their masks correctly.

"Some staff remark to AICs that they already had COVID," according to the inspection report. "Observed AICs and staff pull down masks to talk and/or do not wear them properly."

Zach Erdman, operations and policy manager at the Oregon Department of Corrections, wrote in a Sept. 17 email that "many staff have been verbally counseled, resulting in immediate and cooperative compliance. DOC does not track these minor corrections. To date, a few employees are in investigative processes which could lead to discipline. Non-compliance with face covering directives has not yet led to a dismissal, but it could."

But the accountability processes Erdman spoke of were not effective in preventing the 20% mask non-compliance rate documented in the February evaluation. And in the court ruling, SRCI's assistant superintendent, Jason Bell, testified

under oath that there was widespread noncompliance, but "only one staff member had progressed in discipline to step six (of six possible disciplinary steps) for mask violations."

Kate Edwards, the Hillsboro attorney who tried the SRCI case, said that the culture of mask noncompliance in Ontario wasn't unique, but reflected a problem across the Oregon Department of Corrections.

"As an organization, they have kind of thrown up their hands and said, 'What do you want us to do about it? We have all of these policies in place,'" she explained. "But on the ground, it's not trickling down, it's not being enforced."

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