

Local

BAKER COUNTY CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28

Baker City Airport Commission: 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, 1655 First St. Agenda items include the selection of chair and vice chair, and an update on runway 13-31 seal coat project.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

50 YEARS AGO from the Democrat-Herald April 26, 1971

SAN FRANCISCO — C.S. Rasmussen, manager of the Eastern Oregon Division of California-Pacific Utilities, was elected vice president by the Board of Directors, it was announced today by President Donald J. Carman.

25 YEARS AGO from the Baker City Herald April 26, 1996

What began as a child custody dispute escalated into a hostage situation involving gunfire and a torched vehicle in a south Baker City neighborhood Thursday night. Baker City Police became involved in the incident about 5:30 p.m. It ended at 1:17 a.m. today when Anthony Montwheeler surrendered and released his 3-year-old son.

10 YEARS AGO from the Baker City Herald April 27, 2011

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says trail camera images confirm the existence of at least two Wolverines in the Wallowa Mountains. Making the photos even more exciting to researchers is that the animals are “secretive in terms of avoiding people,” said Meg Kenagy, ODFW Conservation Strategy coordinator.

ONE YEAR AGO from the Baker City Herald April 28, 2020

Baker County’s two representatives in the Oregon Legislature lauded the county’s plan to gradually reopen its economy and encouraged Gov. Kate Brown to approve the proposal soon. State Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, both endorsed the 15-page plan that county officials sent Friday to the governor’s office. The plan calls for easing restrictions on businesses and some events, while continuing to encourage people to practice social distancing, over a period of about a month so long as parameters related to the coronavirus are met. As of Monday Baker County had yet to have a confirmed case. Nancy Staten, administrator at the Baker County Health Department, said 75 residents had been tested. In a press release, Findley said he is “thoroughly impressed with the preparedness of the Baker County Commissioners and their staff that coordinated and put together this plan in such a short timeframe. This response should be used as an example for others to utilize during this pandemic.” Owens urged Brown “to approve this plan and allow Baker County to immediately begin implementation and reopening. Act now and do not delay this any further.”

OREGON LOTTERY

MEGABUCKS, April 24
12 — 14 — 20 — 33 — 36 — 39
Next jackpot: \$1.9 million

POWERBALL, April 24
22 — 36 — 48 — 59 — 61 PB 22
Next jackpot: \$116 million

MEGA MILLIONS, April 23
4 — 28 — 29 — 30 — 60 Mega 25
Next jackpot: \$297 million

WIN FOR LIFE, April 24
9 — 54 — 66 — 68
PICK 4, April 25
• 1 p.m.: 1 — 0 — 2 — 4
• 4 p.m.: 6 — 0 — 0 — 7
• 7 p.m.: 3 — 4 — 1 — 6
• 10 p.m.: 3 — 3 — 4 — 3
LUCKY LINES, April 25
1-89-16-18-21-27-31
Next jackpot: \$12,000

SENIOR MENUS

- **WEDNESDAY:** Chicken and homestyle noodles, carrots, biscuits, fruit cup, birthday cake
- **THURSDAY:** Baked ziti, zucchini, garlic breadsticks, green salad, brownies
- **FRIDAY:** Barbecued pork ribs, au gratin potatoes, green beans, biscuits, broccoli and bacon salad, apple crisp
- **MONDAY (May 3):** Barbecued ribs, baked beans, corn, rolls, ambrosia, cookies
- **TUESDAY (May 4):** Chicken fried chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, rolls, macaroni salad, ice cream

Public luncheon at the Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St., from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; \$4.50 donation (60 and older), \$6.75 for those under 60. Meals must be picked up; no dining on site.

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RAIN

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Both days exceeded the rainfall total for the whole of March. With just 0.14 of an inch, it was the second-driest March at the airport since at least 1943. The driest March was 1969, with a total of 0.13. Both March and April average about 0.80 of an inch of rain. Ralph Morgan, a cattle rancher who lives southwest of Baker City near Mason Dam, said the weekend rain was welcome.

“We’re definitely in a drought period,” Morgan said on Monday morning, April 26. “It’s extremely dry.” Morgan said rainfall was not evenly distributed. At his house, for instance, he measured just 0.13 of an inch.

A rain gauge just below Mason Dam recorded 0.11 of an inch. Amounts were generally higher in the northern and eastern parts of the county. A weather station on Morgan Mountain, northwest of Huntington, measured 0.62 of an inch Saturday and Sunday, while Sparta Butte north of Richland had 0.43.

The soggy spell continued into Monday, April 26. A strong shower in the afternoon brought hail as well as rain. As of 2:30 p.m., an additional 0.12 of an inch of rain had fallen, bringing April’s total at the airport to 0.56.

Morgan said this spring has been noteworthy not only for its lack of rain, but also for its cool nights. The overnight low has dipped below 20 degrees on six days during April. Three of those days set new record lows. The chilly nights have slowed the melting of snow, Morgan said.

He noticed a drift of snow near his home while he was changing irrigation pipes Monday morning. Typically, the last drift disappears in early April from that area, Morgan said. The relatively abundant mountain snowpack will partially help to offset the effects of the dry spring, said Jeff Colton, who manages the Baker Valley Irrigation District.

With rain absent for the past month, he had to start releasing more water from Phillips Reservoir more than two weeks ago. Only about once a decade is it necessary to increase the outflow from the reservoir to meet irrigation demand, Colton said.

Most years, rainfall keeps newly planted crops nourished, he said. Colton is optimistic that once the mountain snow begins melting more rapidly, farmers won’t need as much water and he’ll be able to store much of the water in the reservoir, to be doled out this summer.

But Colton said it’s all but certain that the reservoir will have little water this fall, once the irrigation season ends. As of Monday, Phillips was holding 23% of its capacity of 73,500 acre-feet of water. (One acre-foot of water would cover one acre of flat ground to a depth of one foot. The measurement equals about 326,000 gallons.) Other reservoirs, with much smaller volumes, were in better shape. Both Thief Valley (capacity of about 13,300 acre-feet) and Unity (25,000 acre-feet) reservoirs were full on Monday.

EXTREME

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That change kept Baker County from moving to extreme risk on April 23. The county’s total of 79 new cases during a two-week period ending April 17 would have previously qualified the county for extreme risk. The threshold for that risk level is 60 cases over two weeks.

But over the past week the number of people hospitalized in Oregon for COVID-19 treatment has increased significantly, from 200 on April 17 to 295 on April 24.

The number dropped to 291 on Sunday, April 25.

Bennett said that after participating in a conference call on Friday with state officials, he believes that “if we can keep our numbers low there is a slim chance of negotiating out of (moving to extreme risk).” But as of Monday, April 26, Bennett said state officials hadn’t given counties details about how the state will determine which counties move to extreme risk should the hospitalization total surpass the 300 mark.

In the past the state has set risk levels for each county based on its case counts — and, for counties with larger populations, positivity rates — for a recent two-week period. The state apparently will use a different measurement period in determining which counties move to extreme risk, but Bennett said he has yet to see specifics. Regardless, he said the fewer the cases the county has, the stronger the county’s negotiating position should be. “We’re certainly going to keep up the advocacy,” Bennett said. “It’s a full-court press. We will push it really hard.”

The county’s trend over the weekend was encouraging, Bennett said.

After reporting 14 new cases on April 21 and 11 more on April 22 — the fourth-highest two-day total during the pandemic — the county’s daily totals from Friday through Sunday were six, two and one.

The county’s daily new case rate has dropped slightly in the second half of April, from 6.2 per day from April 1-15, to 5.1 per day from April 16-25.

Staten said last week that the major sources of the recent surge in cases are private social gatherings. Baker School District reports 3 new cases. The Baker School District reported that one individual each at Brooklyn Primary School, South Baker Intermediate School and Baker High School tested positive for COVID-19 last week. The district announced the positive cases on Friday, April 23. The district, which until recently had distinguished between students and staff who tested positive, no longer does so, identifying them only as “individuals” and the school each is associated with. Students or staff who were in close contact with one of the people who tested positive will be asked to quarantine temporarily. As of Tuesday, April 27, a total of 25 students, and no staff members, are quarantining in the district, said Lindsey McDowell, the district’s public information and communications coordinator. Of the 25 students, 16 are attending Baker High School.



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

The Powder River flows through Baker City on Monday, April 26. The river is carrying more water than usual for April to supply irrigation water to farmers and ranchers.

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NEWS OF RECORD

DEATHS

Betty Perry: 93, of Baker City, died April 23, 2021, at Settler’s Park. Services are under the direction of Coles Tribute Center. To light a candle in memory of Betty, go to www.colestribute-center.com.

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police Arrests, citations
FAILURE TO APPEAR (Baker County Circuit Court warrant): Melissa Lee Zimmer, 44, Baker City, 12:17 a.m. Sunday, April 25 at Main Street and Washington Avenue; cited and released.
FAILURE TO APPEAR (4 Baker County warrants); **OUT-OF-COUNTY WARRANTS:** Darion Alyssa Marie Grove, 26, Baker City, 6:13 p.m. Friday, April 23 in the 2200 block of Broadway Street; jailed.
FAILURE TO PERFORM DUTIES OF A DRIVER: Monica Millie Robles, 23, Baker City, 4:48 p.m. Friday, April 23 in the 1500 block of 11th Street; cited and released.

Baker School District reports 3 new cases

The Baker School District reported that one individual each at Brooklyn Primary School, South Baker Intermediate School and Baker High School tested positive for COVID-19 last week. The district announced the positive cases on Friday, April 23. The district, which until recently had distinguished between students and staff who tested positive, no longer does so, identifying them only as “individuals” and the school each is associated with. Students or staff who were in close contact with one of the people who tested positive will be asked to quarantine temporarily. As of Tuesday, April 27, a total of 25 students, and no staff members, are quarantining in the district, said Lindsey McDowell, the district’s public information and communications coordinator. Of the 25 students, 16 are attending Baker High School.

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