

# Baker City Herald

August 14, 2021

Serving Baker County since 1870 • bakercityherald.com



In SPORTS, A6

Gebbia healthy and ready

IN THIS EDITION:

Local • Outdoors & Rec • Sports

\$1.50

QUICK HITS

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Mark Berthelsen of Baker City.

BRIEFING

**Black Butte fire 25% contained**

As of Friday, Aug. 13, the Black Butte Fire burning in nearby Grant County is 25% contained with a total of 16,609 acres burned.

Firefighters were able to secure black line from the north and along the eastern edge of the fire.

According to a press release, on the northeast edge, crews will secure and hold alternate lines and continue to prep the 416 road. Along the eastern edge of the fire, crews will again utilize air support to limit fire spread east of the North Fork of the Malheur River.

Protecting private lands and structures at Flag Prairie is a priority, and mop-up work will begin on primary lines.

Along the southern edge of the fire, crews will hold and secure lines and put in hose lay to the North Fork of the Malheur River to control fire spread to the south.

To the west, crews will construct hand lines from Crane Creek Trailhead to the 832 road and continue prep of primary lines, burning vegetation along the 1420 road.

WEATHER

Today

98 / 66



Sunny and smoky

Sunday

99 / 61



Mostly sunny

Monday

90 / 56



Sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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



Bob Bennett, left, and his daughter, Lori Brock on the front door of the Pondosa store on July 20, 2021.

Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

## Town's gone BUT THE STORE STAYS

Bob Bennett, age 98, is again operating the Pondosa store seven days a week after limits due to the pandemic



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

The Pondosa store is in a house built in 1923.

By LISA BRITTON

Baker City Herald

PONDOSA — Bob Bennett is just three years older than the Pondosa Store, where he's been selling cold drinks and ice cream since 1983.

Bob, 98, was born in 1923.

The store was built in 1926 to serve Pondosa, a mill town about 25 miles north of Baker City on Highway 203, a couple miles from Medical Springs.

Pondosa as a town no longer exists.

But Bob is happy to share the story with anyone who happens by his remote store.

Although Pondosa was home to 500 people at one time, it was wholly dependent on a lumber mill.

The mill closed in 1959 — just one year after the area was named the geographic center of the United States with the addition of Alaska and Hawaii.

"They were going to name it Centerville, USA, but the town closed up," said Lori Brock, Bob's daughter who moved to Pondosa several years ago.

See, **Pondosa** / Page 3A

### Baker County health officer discusses spike in cases

Baker City Herald

With the latest spike in COVID-19 cases, the Baker County Health Department is working with more people who are sick now than at any other time during the pandemic.

According to a press release sent out Thursday, Aug. 12, Baker County's Public Health Officer, Dr. Eric Lamb, is concerned about the health of the community and what this means for Baker County's schools, workforce and businesses.

"Baker County has fared better than many other areas of the state and nation. The number of hospitalizations or transfers to other hospitals have been around 50, and unfortunately, there have been 18 COVID-19 related deaths. However, right now we are seeing a spike in cases and hospitalizations that threatens to overwhelm hospital capacity," said Lamb in the press release.

The spike in cases has increased the rate of local hospitalizations. Lamb attributes the surge in cases to the County's low vaccination rate, which the Oregon Health Authority reports at 47.3% of residents 18 and older.

"If we had gotten to an 80% vaccination rate, the pandemic would be over for us right now," said Lamb in the press release.

See, **Cases** / Page A3

### Baker County, and Oregon as a whole, grew in last decade

Baker County saw population increase by 3.3% according to latest census data

By COREY KIRK

Baker City Herald

Though running behind by about four months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 U.S. Census was officially released Thursday, Aug. 12, showing that not only the state of Oregon, but most of its counties, are continuing to thrive, according to Charles Rynerson with the Population Research Center at Portland State University.

Every county except one in the state of Oregon has seen a population increase over the past decade. In 2010, Baker County had about 16,134 people within its confines.

The 2020 census marks the population at 16,668, seeing a 3.3% increase of people that call this region home.

"Relative to the rest of the nation, (the fact that) Oregon's predominantly rural counties are not losing as much is relevant. Oregon has attracted more migration than most states, and that's going to continue," Rynerson said.

See, **Census** / Page A3

## City Council discusses House Bill 3115

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR  
Baker City Herald

City Manager Jon Cannon discussed House Bill 3115 with the Baker City Council at their regular session Tuesday, August 10.

According to the Oregon State Legislature, HB 3115 provides that "local law regulating sitting, lying, sleeping or keeping warm and dry outdoors on public property that is open to public must be objectively reasonable as to time, place and manner with regards to persons experiencing homelessness."

HB 3115 creates "cause of action for person experiencing homelessness to

challenge objective reasonableness of such local law."

It authorizes the court to award attorney fees to prevailing "plaintiff in such suit in certain circumstances."

Cannon said HB 3115 is of significance to the city.

"This has a real potential to impact our law enforcement as well as our budget as well as potentially our ambulance services and our fire department," said Cannon.

He also discussed Oregon Statute 203.077; "local governments to develop humane policy for removal of homeless camps from public property."

Law enforcement must provide a notice of 24 hours, in English and Spanish, and shall inform local agencies that deliver social services to homeless individuals where the notice has been posted.

"And those agencies have the option to come in and offer assistance or whatever. But this is required by our law enforcement to put this post out that they have 24 hours to vacate," said Cannon.

Once people leave, if any property is left behind, that has to be collected and saved for 30 days, made available for individuals to claim.

Exceptions are weapons, drug paraphernalia and items involved or thought to be involved with a crime.

"We do not have a policy in place, that I'm aware of, for 203.077. So that is something that we're going to need to work on and put into place in order for us to do the 24-hour notice," said Cannon.

Cannon said then there is the option of a follow-up assessment as to whether removals are occurring in a humane and just manner is an option for law enforcement to handle.

See, **Council** / Page A3



8 51153 00102 0

TODAY  
Issue 41, 12 pages



Classified ..... B2  
Comics ..... B5  
Community News .... A2

Crossword ..... B2  
Dear Abby ..... B6  
Horoscope ..... B2

News of Record ..... A2  
Obituaries ..... A2  
Opinion ..... A4

Outdoors ..... B1  
Senior Menus ..... A2  
Sports ..... A6

Turning Backs ..... A2  
Weather ..... B6

TUESDAY — SEEKING THE TOP TUNA SANDWICH, IN HOME & LIVING