

Hanley's cartoon maps coming to Baker City

By **SAMANTHA O'CONNOR**
Baker City Herald

Nationally recognized cartoonist, Jon Hanley, is teaming with the Baker County Chamber of Commerce this summer to produce a unique, one of a kind "Historic brochure map." Shelly Cutler, executive director of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce, is excited.

"We think it's going to just be a fun project," said Cutler. Cutler said Hanley did a

picture of Baker City back in 2006 and Tom Novac did one in 1990. Novac's had been more detailed and they have never done a map that people could take with them.

"We've been working with Jon to create a map that will be foldable, like a brochure, and when folks come to the Visitor's Center, we're able to give them their fun cartoon map of the city," said Cutler.

The cartoon map will have the exact vision of the build-

ing so visitors can see what it looks like before they get there.

"We got kind of the idea this go-around because the Eagle Valley area, Richland, Halfway, in that area, they are doing one as well. And so we thought, 'well heck yeah. We're going to have one for Richland and Halfway, let's do one that incorporates Baker City and a little bit of Sumpter and Haines,'" said Cutler.

It will all be in one map

and will be modified and not exact to scale.

Hanley will begin working with businesses this month to see who is interested in participating. Once they confirm with local businesses that want to be showcased, Cutler said they will look at historic landmarks and other areas of interest.

They plan to have the cartoon map ready to go this fall.

The Chamber will carry them at their location and be

available for local businesses to carry for their customers.

"I think it's going to be something fun, something different, something unique that the visitors will just really be able to enjoy and hold onto as a keepsake," said Cutler.

"Our maps are funded by the business community as advertising and bragging rights! Once the downtown is presented I will work with Shelly (Cutler) at the Chamber on incorporating as much

of the history, geological landmarks and historic buildings as we can fit on the artwork!" said Hanley in a press release.

Cutler said there is a fee involved as it is an advertising map and Hanley will discuss it with the businesses interested.

Space is limited to a first come first serve basis. To learn more or to reserve your space on the map, contact Jon Hanley at 541-786-5776 or Shelly Cutler at 541-523-5855.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Pondosa proclaimed itself as the geographic center of the U.S. after Hawaii and Alaska were added as states in 1959.

PONDOSA

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Lester Gaddy, brother to Bob's wife Jean, saw an advertisement in the Eugene Register-Guard.

"The whole town. For sale," Lori said.

Lester, she said, "traded three city blocks for the whole town."

Lester died in 1982, and left his property to his only sister, Jean.

Jean and Bob Bennett faced a decision: sell the Pondosa property, or sell their Eugene home and move to Eastern Oregon.

"I had a debate on it," Bob remembers.

He'd lived in Eugene all of his life, and had recently retired from Georgia-Pacific, a timber company.

But he was tired of the rain west of the Cascades.

So the couple sold their place and moved to Pondosa in 1983.

"All this nice sunshine and fresh air," Bob said. "It was a good idea. I kept busy over here."

Although the houses had been sold and moved to other towns nearby, Bob discovered a huge pile of sawdust left at the mill site.

He can point it out, too, on the aerial photo of Pondosa that hangs on the wall of the store.

He set to grinding up that sawdust and started selling it as garden mulch.

"I'd deliver it in five-yard loads all over," he said.

That kept him busy for a while, until the pile finally disappeared.

"It took 20 years," he said with a smile.

While he worked at that, Jean ran the store.

"People yet talk about her. She'd visit with everybody," Bob said.

Jean passed away in 2015. During her illness, she and Bob lived in Nampa with Lori and her husband, Dennis.

After Jean died, Lori thought her father might stay in Idaho with her.

But he returned to Pondosa in the winter of 2015.

The store is warmed by three wood stoves, so Lori and Dennis came as often as they could to help haul firewood and move the snowdrifts.

That lasted only a few months before they decided, in February 2016, to move to Pondosa.

Prior to her marriage, Lori had lived in Pondosa for a time, and she met her husband in Baker City.

"Twenty-five years later, we're back," she said with a smile.

The Pondosa store has 15 bedrooms. During the days of the mill operation, the 12 bedrooms upstairs were rented to single men — two to a room. They all shared one bathroom.

In addition to the store, the town boasted a gas station, meat market, and post office.

"That old vault is where they stored the payroll," Bob said, pointing to a structure just across the driveway from the store.

Although the store was closed for a bit when Jean was sick, and again in the depths of the coronavirus pandemic, it is now open seven days a week.

"Once we got Dad vaccinated, we opened back up," Lori said.

Lori, who is a registered nurse, administered her dad's second dose, on Feb. 11 at the Baker County Health Department in Baker City.

"We're here and adding to our business," Bob added.

Lori said the store stocks "mostly refreshments and snacks" — soda, ice cream, candy and chips. But Bob can serve up burritos, too, and he offers some essentials such as flour, sugar, milk and eggs.

They've also applied for a liquor license.

The store is open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Offerings have expanded outside as well. This spring they developed three campsites, and Lori posted the availability on the website hipcamp.com.

"We get campers off the freeway," Lori said. "North Carolina is the farthest away."

Between the store and campsites is a deck surrounded by trees and flowers in an area dedicated to Jean's memory.

"We fixed up Mom's little park," Lori said.

She said it's proven popular as a resting spot for touring car clubs as well as travelers on motorcycles and bicycles.

"It's like a little oasis in the middle of the desert," Lori said.

For updates on the store, check the Facebook page: Pondosa, Oregon: the geographic center of the United States.

COUNCIL

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"The language in here uses the word 'may' and they may do this follow up assessment, they may bring in these local agencies that they notified and had that discussion. I think, quite honestly, they're going to need to in order to make sure that we've done our due diligence to prove that we made every effort to meet those two requirements in 203.077," said Cannon.

The other exceptions to the 24-hour notice are if there are illegal activities other than camping are occurring and exceptional emergencies such as flooding or site contamination.

Cannon said in the Baker City ordinances, they have one that goes with the parks.

"It's not adequate as a policy to address, to meet this statute," said Cannon.

City attorney Dan Van Thiel attended the meeting to answer any questions the council had.

Mayor Kerry McQuisten asked if there were any lawsuits already filed with HB 3115.

He said there are two federal cases, one out of Boise

and one out of Southwestern Oregon.

Van Thiel said the litigation concerning this area is the federal court system, not the state court system. They have lawyers looking at it from all over the state looking at it.

"I want to assure this council that, while I've attended innumerable sessions over this subject, I want this city to move cautiously," said Van Thiel.

He said it is a "very dangerous area of the law."

"It's actually a part of four bills that were introduced and 3115 is compromised and I suspect the other three were also," said Van Thiel.

Cannon said their best effort at that point is to create a policy that says they will put up a sign that people have 24 hours to move on.

"If they don't move, we probably don't have a lot of teeth to do anything. If they do move, then we have together up all the stuff, put it in storage, so the site gets cleaned up, wait 30 days, and then we can dispose of the items. From a practical standpoint, that is about what we have on our tool belt right now," said Cannon.

McQuisten said they will continue these discussions in future meetings.

CASES

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The Oregon Health Authority reported 670 COVID-19 related hospitalizations in Oregon Thursday, the highest number at any time during the pandemic.

Lamb said this is a call to action.

"First, absolutely stay home if you're sick, don't pass illness to others. Second, get vaccinated. The virus will keep mutating and spreading until we eliminate potential carriers," said Lamb in the press release.

Lamb said he likes to think of it like fighting a wildfire.

"Unless we remove the fuel in front of the fire, it will keep burning. Widespread vaccination is the quickest way that we can stop this virus. Natural immunity will take another 3-5 years or more for this virus to burn out — if it doesn't keep mutating. Third, wash your hands often, and fourth, wear a face covering indoors to avoid unknowingly spreading the

virus to others," said Lamb in the press release.

Lamb recommends everyone 12 and older get vaccinated.

Baker County provides transportation services for those needing assistance to access vaccination and testing.

Lamb said he has heard concerns about the vaccine approval process being sped up.

"President Donald Trump initiated Operation Warp Speed to bypass bureaucratic red tape to get these vaccines in arms as quickly as possible. What was not rushed was the clinical trials and studies," said Lamb in the press release.

According to the press release, full FDA approval is expected in September for the Pfizer vaccine, with the other two vaccines closely thereafter.

"Help keep our kids in school, get our workforce back to work and our economy moving forward. Consider getting vaccinated," said Lamb in the press release.

To take advantage of these services contact the Baker County Health Department at 541-523-8211.

CENSUS

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To see that population is increasing is interesting because Rynerson was quick to note that as a whole, Oregon reported more deaths than births in the last 10 years.

"That was true in the majority of counties. There were more deaths than births due to aging populations and low birth rates," Rynerson said. "That's only going to accelerate. So in order to save off loss those counties will be expected to attract more people moving in than out."

A contributing factor in why births are lower than deaths is that populations are seeing birth rates plunge among different categories as more women are focused on building a family at a later age unlike decades before.

"If you look at the teen and the early twenties birth rates, those have just plunged beyond belief. They are the lowest it's ever been in the history of the U.S. and that's generally a good thing. People understand the difficulty of having a child at a very young age, and even up to age 30, there are far fewer births to women under 30 than there were in the past," Rynerson said.

Oftentimes residents who migrated from other states to Oregon are those that are on the search for economic opportunity and are a part of the working age population, but it doesn't correlate with the birth rate in counties, let alone states.

"The warehouse industry, the junction between I-84 and I-82, and the ports among Umatilla and Morrow counties, that has given the counties real economic

advantages that have attracted workers over the last few decades," Rynerson said. "In the long term, Oregon is going to grow if we keep attracting people from other states and countries, but we aren't going to continue to grow from births."

The Census date was originally scheduled for April of 2020, but with the COVID-19 pandemic making its mark just one month earlier, the numbers were only briefly disrupted, which mainly only reflected on college towns, but saw higher participation as a whole compared to the 2010 census.

"A lot of students went home before census day, and there was a big concern over data collection that I think the real economic impact of the pandemic won't be showing up in these 2020 numbers because of when

the census was done, and the census was very happy with the completeness of the data collection. They had more time to do it, there was a higher self-response rate in 2020 than in 2010 statewide," Rynerson said.

Though it's easy to misconceive that the pandemic can raise the birth rate due to the lockdown, Rynerson was quick to point out that the complete opposite was true.

"People don't want to be having a child when the hospitals are overcrowded, and they can't go anywhere or do anything, so the pandemic had a bigger effect on birth rates in the long run than death rates," Rynerson said.

The biggest surprise for Rynerson was in race and ethnicity.

Since people are able to mark more than one race when they are filling out

their census, the percentages of people who solely marked white's percentages actually dropped, barely increasing by about 30,000.

"The reason that white alone fell was because fewer hispanics, when they got to the race question, which is a separate question, fewer identified as white alone and many, many more identified as white and some other race," Rynerson said. "There's a growing realization because it's become standard on all kinds of questionnaires and federal data collection. Ten years ago it was kind of new to people that they can write in multiple ethnic, ancestry, racial identities, (but) now it's kind of more well known that is something that you can do, so people took advantage of it."

Ultimately, for those who aren't too knowledgeable on

what the Census is able to accomplish, it provides government funding to towns big or small to assist them in their day-to-day operations, so all it would cost a resident is their time.

"It's really important. The state of Oregon overall, some of it goes to the state in general, but some of it goes to communities," Rynerson said. "The per capita revenue that cities get is based on population. Anybody that's not counted means fewer dollars in their communities."

Census questionnaires are often filled out online, but in different communities where internet use is sparse, these questionnaires are expected to be mailed back to the returning address.

For more information on the 2020 Census, go to <https://www.census.gov/en.html>.