



In SPORTS, A6

Ready for fall sports

# Baker City Herald

August 21, 2021

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QUICK HITS

### Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Carolyn Palmer of Baker City.

### Oregon, A3

Facing a sharp surge in COVID-19 infections that threatens to swamp Oregon hospitals, Gov. Kate Brown ordered a double dose of mandatory vaccination mandates on Thursday, Aug. 19.

All K-12 educators, school staff and volunteers must be vaccinated no later than Oct. 18.

"COVID-19 poses a threat to our kids, and our kids need to be protected and they need to be in school," Brown said.

BRIEFING

### County commissioners, Baker City Council to meet Aug. 25

The Baker County Board of Commissioners and Baker City Council will have a joint work session on Wednesday, Aug. 25 to discuss the Request for Proposals for operating a visitor center in Baker City. The meeting will start at 6 p.m. at the Baker County Event Center at 2600 East St.

WEATHER

**Today**  
71 / 40  
Showers possible

**Sunday**  
81 / 41  
Mostly sunny

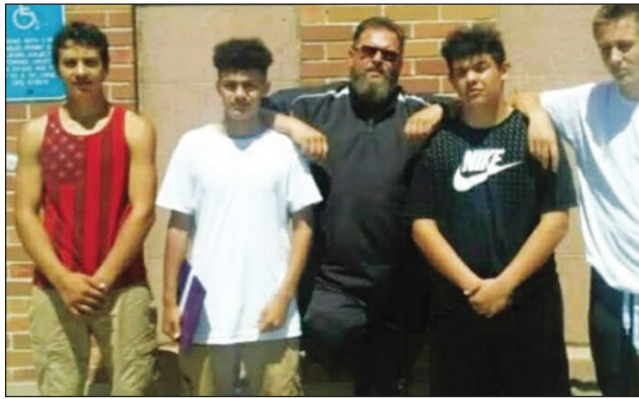
**Monday**  
77 / 37  
Mostly sunny

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

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

# Four Years, Four Boys, No Haircut

■ Jim Howerton vowed not to cut his hair for four years, until the four boys he mentored had graduated from Baker High



Contributed Photo

From left, Ethan Myers Jensen, Carlos Delarosa, Jim Howerton, Shawn Rasmussen and Kadin Palmer in May 2017 in front of the Baker Middle School gym.



Contributed Photo

From left, Ethan Myers Jensen, Carlos Delarosa, Jim Howerton, Shawn Rasmussen and Kadin Palmer in June 2021, replicating their photo from four years earlier.

By JAYSON JACOBY

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Jim Howerton was used to having the sort of haircut that a Marine Corps drill sergeant would appreciate.

He even went bald for a couple years.

And so it was no minor matter for Howerton, 55, a longtime Baker City youth sports coach, to not sacrifice a single strand to the scissors or the razor for four years.

Yet with every inch added to his brown hair, as it reached his shoulders and beyond, Howerton's bond became ever stronger with the four boys who inspired him to ignore his previous affinity for bristles rather than tresses.

"Lots of people would ask me about my hair," Howerton said on Tuesday, Aug. 17, about a month after he finally



Before



After

succumbed to the scissors. "Are you a biker?" they'd ask. It's amazing what people assume based on looks."

Howerton, though, wasn't offended by such queries.

Indeed he was happy to explain his hirsute appearance.

It all started late in the spring of 2017, with those four boys, all close friends — Ethan Myers Jensen, Carlos Delarosa, Shawn Rasmussen and Kadin Palmer.

They were eighth graders at Baker Middle School that spring. All four had played football for Howerton, who has coached Baker City youngsters, in Little League, YMCA and other venues, since 1987.

Howerton said he was convinced each of the boys had great potential.

"I knew the kind of character they had," he said. "They are strong boys." But he was also concerned.

"I was worried about the paths they were taking," Howerton said.

Rasmussen, who's now 18, said Howerton had a keen sense of the situation at that time.

"In middle school we were just not great kids," Rasmussen said.

See, *Mentor* / Page A3

## Perry resigns from City Council

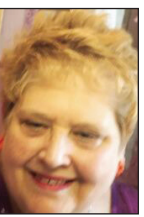
■ Councilor, elected in 2018, cites health issues

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR

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Baker City Councilor Lynette Perry announced her resignation on Wednesday, Aug. 18, citing health issues.

Perry was elected in November 2018 to a four-year term.



Perry

"There are many issues that will be coming before the Council that I feel strongly about and would like to represent the city population by being able to vote on their behalf, however the time has come that I just must cut back on my stress level," Perry said. "Stepping down from Council was a very hard decision, but one that had to be made."

Perry wrote in her letter of resignation, sent to City Manager Jon Cannon and her six fellow councilors, that she believes that when you agree to serve your community or any organization that you "give one hundred percent of yourself to the task at hand."

See, *Councilor* / Page A3

## Protesters: No masks in schools

■ Protest started just before Baker School Board discussed COVID protocols

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR

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While parents and others marched through downtown Baker City on Thursday evening, Aug. 19, protesting the state mandate that students wear face masks this fall, the Baker School Board was meeting by Zoom to discuss that and other COVID-19-related protocols.

The board met just hours after Gov. Kate Brown announced that teachers and all other school staff, including volunteers, must be vaccinated by Oct. 18 (see related story on Page A3).

Board member Travis Cook said he is concerned about the possibility of school workers resigning due to the vaccine mandate.

"If the governor mandates this, how many teachers, transportation personnel, food service personnel, are just going to say 'we're done' and move to Idaho or whatever," Cook said.

Superintendent Mark Witty said that is an topic of heated discussion among school officials statewide.

"That's a real concern," Witty told the board. "It is here locally. I'm, again, just preaching for patience so we can actually understand how this actually is implemented and I am hopeful that there's opportunities for those that have chosen not to take the

vaccine to be able to continue working."

The state mandate includes two exemptions to the vaccination requirement: medical and religious.

The medical exemption should be relatively straightforward, Witty said.

"We anticipate that that would be going in to your medical health provider and having that discussion with them and then they'd fill out the paperwork and if they believe in their opinion it's not safe for you to take the vaccine, then you'd put that on file with the district office," Witty said.

The details about the religious exemption are less clear, he said.

When it comes to students' vaccination requirements,

parents can sign a religious exemption.

"That is the current practice that is in place and I am hopeful there is a little bit of latitude there but I want to get the rules before I can say consequently exactly how that'll play out," Witty said.

Lindsey McDowell, the district's public information and communications coordinator, wrote in an email to the Herald on Friday morning, Aug. 20, that she did not know of any resignations "specifically tied to the new mandates."

"We have a good relationship with our two unions and are working closely with them," McDowell wrote.

Witty said the district's contracts with its two unions — one representing mainly



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Debbie Henshaw participated in a protest of the school mask mandate on Thursday, Aug. 19 outside the David J. Wheeler Federal Building in Baker City.

teachers, the other representing other staff — provide 80 hours of paid leave

See, *Masks* / Page A5

## Chamber will operate visitors center after county contract expires

By JAYSON JACOBY

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The Baker County Chamber of Commerce will continue to operate the visitors center at 490 Campbell St. after its contract with Baker County ends Aug. 31.

Shelly Cutler, the Chamber's executive director, said Baker County Commission Chairman Bill Harvey told

her in a phone call Wednesday morning, Aug. 18, that the county won't extend the contract beyond the end of this month.

"We're not to the end of the (tourist) season," Cutler said. "We want to maintain that continuity."

County commissioner Mark Bennett applauded the Chamber's decision to oper-

ate the visitors center while commissioners await proposals for the new contract the county hopes to award by early October.

"I certainly am appreciative that the Chamber has stepped up and will be furnishing the service for this limited amount of time," Bennett said on Thursday, Aug. 19.

Bennett said he would have been leery of letting the contract with the Chamber expire Aug. 31 had the county not had a timeline in place to award a new contract little more than a month later.

County commissioners decided in early March of this year to extend the contract with the Chamber through Aug. 31, with a goal of award-

ing a new contract by then.

But earlier this month the county released a Request for Proposals for the visitor center contract that sets a deadline of Sept. 17 for prospective contractors to submit a proposal. The schedule also calls for the county to issue a notice of intent to award the

See, *Visitors* / Page A3



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