

HEALTH

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Q: What is the capacity at Saint Alphonus Medical Center in Baker City?

Lynn said capacity changes from moment to moment and can depend on the condition of patients being seen and the resources they need.

Lynn said the Saint Alphonus system, including its larger hospitals in Boise and Nampa, are seeing admissions of COVID-19 patients that meet or exceed the peak during the pandemic. More than 20% of patients at the Boise hospital, and 35% at Nampa, are people who tested positive for COVID-19, Lynn said.

“And I think it’s important to note that, even though we don’t have a high volume of COVID patients that are kept in our Baker City hospital, because we do see that they get very sick very quickly, we have transferred in the month of August 12 community members afflicted with COVID-19 to higher level care facilities,” Lynn said. “And that’s 35% of our total transfers to higher levels of care this month. So, those are big numbers for our community and if you could consider what those 12 admissions would mean to our small hospital, that would be extremely impactful.”

Q: Is the hospital planning on canceling any elective surgeries?

Lynn said non-emergency surgeries have not been canceled at the Baker City hospital.

The Saint Alphonus system has canceled such procedures through Sept. 18 at its Boise and Nampa hospitals.

Q: It was reported the state is sending additional resources like the National Guard to assist hospitals. Is this something that’s occurring in Baker County

and why is this necessary if it is?

Wittich said local officials were expecting National Guard soldiers to arrive Friday, Sept. 3, and to be here for several weeks, serving in support roles for medical staff.

“We’re experiencing in some of our nonclinical areas the same staffing shortage that some of our local businesses are experiencing and our staff are very tired and we really want to be able to give them a reprieve,” Wittich said.

Q: What has the reaction been among hospital staff to the state’s vaccine mandate? Have there been any resignations? Are there contingency plans if the hospital staff is cut significantly either due to resignation or termination related to the vaccine mandate?

Wittich said Saint Alphonus has strongly encouraged employees to get vaccinated and began working in compliance with the mandate after the governor’s order on Aug. 19.

“So, at this time our colleagues are really in the process of complying with the vaccine requirement or asking for an exemption based on religious or medical reason and we still have time until that deadline so we really don’t have solid information as this process is ongoing,” Wittich said. “We are working really diligently to ensure our processes support our colleagues through this. And then you know that we have until the October 18th deadline to be fully vaccinated or have an approved exemption, medical or religious exemption.”

Q: If somebody has symptoms, when should you seek medical care and where can individuals get tested if they need to?

Lamb said people should seek medical attention when their symptoms become worse than the average flu or cold, such as when they are having

difficulty breathing, struggling for air, and cannot speak full sentences without taking a breath.

Q: Can you speak to the importance of masking, social distancing, and vaccination in the schools?

“There has recently been a study out of Texas Tech that showed that with the delta variant in particular, that masking and proper wearing of masks helped decrease transmission of delta by about 75%,” Wittich said.

She said this is “extremely critical” especially in schools where the majority of students — those younger than 12 — will be unvaccinated as they are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine.

Q: Why is natural immunity never mentioned?

“Natural immunity is helpful, we’ve learned over the last 18 months that natural immunity has some protection,” Lamb said. “It lasts probably 3-4 months before it starts to fade. Vaccination we’re learning probably lasts 8-10 months before it starts to fade so there is definitely a role for natural immunity and along with vaccination that’s part of the way we’re going to get our community to have immunity to this virus.”

Q: Why get a vaccine if you can still get COVID and still spread it just as much as unvaccinated? What good does it do?

Wittich said the vaccines at this point are performing well even against the delta variant as far as keeping people out of the hospital.

“And that is one of the primary things we need right now is for people to not be hospitalized,” Wittich said.

She said there is some early data that suggests that vaccinated people can still spread the virus; however, the length of time that they can spread the virus may be shorter.



Samantha O’Conner/Baker City Herald

Gordon Holman is working on the inside of the former Baker House building as well as its exterior.

CONDOS

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In recent years, the building had been a spot where adults and kids would gather illegally, including some squatters.

“I saw the opportunities despite all the things that were wrong with it,” said Holman, who bought the building for \$95,000, according to Baker County Assessor’s Office records.

Most of the damage was due to overflowing roof drains leaking water into the concrete walls, making the material soft and no longer structurally sound, Holman said.

He said he believes the building had not been heated for at least 15 years, and the excessive moisture caused most of the interior paint to peel.

There was abundant asbestos in the building as well, but that was removed recently.

“All of that was completed, I’ve got a clean building,” Holman said.

He said the condos will each have more than 1,600 square feet of living space, and he intends to build outside decks.

The building has a new roof, among other renovations.

“We’ve made some good strides but we’ve still got

a long ways to go,” Holman said.

Future aspects of the project include repairing three of the four exterior walls, as well as installing an elevator.

Holman hopes to finish the work by June 2022.

But he said his main focus now is finishing another major renovation, of the former Foursquare Church, near the Baker County Courthouse at the corner of Third and Court.

Holman bought that building, constructed in 1929, in November 2020.

He started renovating that building earlier this year, working with Buddy Payne.

PLEA

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Charges that were dismissed, in addition to first-degree murder, are two counts of second-degree assault, solicitation of murder, and first-degree assault.

The murder and assault charges are Measure 11 crimes in Oregon, and all, upon conviction, carry mandatory minimum sentences that range from 25 years for murder to 70 months for second-degree assault.

Neither Greenwood nor his attorney, Jim A. Schaeffer of La Grande, could be reached for comment.

Baxter’s reference to Shannon Regan, the Baker City Police detective who was the lead investigator in Parish’s death, has been at the focus of the case since early summer.

On June 25, Schaeffer filed a motion seeking to dismiss all charges against Greenwood. Schaeffer contends Regan violated Greenwood’s constitutional rights by listening to five phone calls that Greenwood, who was in the Baker County Jail, made to Schaeffer’s cellphone in 2020.

In court filings, Schaeffer

wrote that he and Greenwood discussed trial strategy during those calls, which are protected by the attorney-client privilege.

After hearings in Baker County Circuit Court on Aug. 13 and Aug. 24, Shirtcliff ruled that Regan would not be allowed to testify during the trial due to the phone call issue.

Baxter did not contest the claim that Regan listened to the five calls. A forensic investigator from the Oregon Department of Justice who examined hard drives from three computers in the Baker City Police Department concluded that only Regan’s computer had been used to access and play recordings of the five calls.

Police Chief Ty Duby put Regan on paid administrative leave while a criminal investigation of the phone call allegations is ongoing.

Although Shirtcliff denied Schaeffer’s motion to dismiss all charges against Greenwood, the judge did prohibit Baxter from using at trial any evidence that Regan collected after Sept. 14, 2020, the day that her computer was used to access and listen to the five phone calls, according to the forensic investigation.

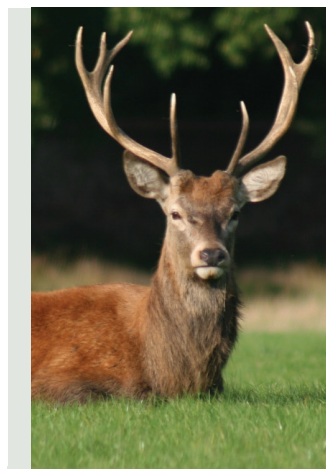
Shirtcliff didn’t decide that evidence Regan had collected or been involved in gathering prior to Sept. 14, 2020, was also inadmissible.

Shirtcliff ruled that the prosecution would have to make a motion seeking to use that evidence during trial. Shirtcliff wrote in his ruling that he would decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether to allow that evidence.

In response, Baxter filed a motion on Aug. 31 arguing that although many pieces of evidence, including bullets found at the crime scene, could not be introduced at trial because they were tainted by Regan’s handling them, he should be allowed to call witnesses who would testify about the evidence, including where it was found and its characteristics.

Schaeffer countered with a motion filed Thursday, Sept. 2, in which he argued that the prosecution should not be allowed to have witnesses testify about items of evidence that could not be introduced during trial due to the chain of custody issue created by the allegations against Regan.

The competing motions were rendered moot by Greenwood’s pleas and the cancellation of the trial.



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