



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Karylanne Brown, Jen Albright and Kathy Peterson look over selections in the book shop, located just inside the door at the Baker County Library. Purchases in the shop support the Friends of the Baker County Library, which funds special library projects and services.

LIBRARY

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Most books are priced at 50 cents or \$1. One shelf is marked as “free.”

Brown is often surprised at the quality of book donations.

“I think some have been read once,” she said.

Kathy Peterson helps sort the donations by genre and condition.

“We have several categories we sort them into,” she said.

These include fiction, nonfiction, children’s, young adult, Christian, western, and science fiction.

Donations

The library is accepting

donations of books. Those who have more than two boxes are asked to call for an appointment, 541-523-6419.

Book sales

Albright said volunteers are always welcome to help at the book sales, which typically span two weekends and the week between.

She said volunteers who can lift heavy boxes of books are especially welcome.

Those who volunteer receive coupons to spend at the sale and the library’s book shop.

Funds

The Friends earn \$5,000 to \$6,000 each year, which helps fund special requests from the

library and its branches.

One of the newest purchases is a subscription to BookPage, which is a monthly magazine detailing new books and stories about authors. Copies are free and available near the front desk.

Here’s a look at what the Friends fund for the library:

- Furnishings: fish tank, book carts, book ends, shelving, renovation costs, blinds, water fountain, landscape fountain
- Programs: Battle of the Books, Early Literacy, Summer Reading Program, eclipse viewers, Free Comic Book Day books, and Makers Club
- Promotions: parade candy and decorations, flags, banners, posters, and bookmarks

More Information

National Friends of Libraries Week is Oct. 17-23. The recognition is coordinated by United for Libraries, a division of the American Library Association.

- Reserves: ballot measure funding and unanticipated needs, such as grant matches
- Staff development: training, appreciation, volunteer appreciation

Contact

Anyone interested in helping at the Friends’ book sales can call the library at 541-523-6419.

THEFT

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One count of first-degree theft and one count of second-degree theft were dismissed.

Judge Russell B. West, who presided over the trial after Judge Matt Shirtcliff recused himself due to a conflict, sentenced Thamert on Oct. 8 to 10 days in the Baker County Jail and 24 months of probation, and ordered him to pay \$10,565 in compensation and restitution to his former business partner, Robert Whitnah of Baker City.

Thamert, who waived a delay in sentencing, also has to pay \$300 in court fees and fines.

Thamert was charged in August 2019 with stealing about \$100,000 from Beehive Homes, the Baker City assisted living center he formerly co-owned with Whitnah.

Thamert and his former wife, Traci, were business partners with Whitnah and his former wife, Krischele Whitnah. Beehive Homes opened in 2014.

Robert Whitnah is now the sole owner of the business, which he renamed Memory Lane Homes.

Whitnah said in a phone interview on Monday, Oct. 11 that he is “really glad that the jury saw through (Thamert’s) nonsense.”

Whitnah said Thamert was not only his business partner, but also his “best friend.”

Whitnah said it was distressing to learn that Thamert had been stealing money from the business.

In regard to the \$10,565 Thamert has to pay, Whitnah said that in his view “this has never been about the money.”

“It’s about needing him to be held accountable.”

Whitnah, who is himself a defense attorney, testified during Thamert’s trial.

Whitnah said he was surprised by how “emotionally involved I was,” even though he acknowledged that it is a different matter to defend someone in a criminal trial as compared to testifying against a defendant.

“I don’t think I was a great witness,” Whitnah said. “I think the state could have gotten more charges if I was a better witness.”

Kurt Miller, a senior assistant state attorney general, prosecuted Thamert.

Thamert, who is the facilities manager for Crook County, was represented by Erick Ward of Bend.

Robert Whitnah said Thamert also had worked as an investigator for the Whitnahs’ law office.

Thamert had been the bookkeeper for the business, Whitnah said. Once Thamert left, an audit was conducted in October and November of 2017. That’s when it became apparent that money was missing, Whitnah said.

MAYOR

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Bland has given McQuisten a letter demanding that she write an email retracting her statements. Bland also wrote that he would consider taking “appropriate legal action against” McQuisten if she does not retract her statements.

Bland also attended the City Council meeting on Tuesday evening, Oct. 12 and repeated his request to McQuisten.

McQuisten didn’t respond to Bland during the meeting.

In a phone interview Tuesday afternoon, Bland said he wants McQuisten to acknowledge that she was wrong in assuming he was intoxicated when he left the voice mails, and to apologize.

“She’s defamed me, and she’s done it on purpose,” Bland said. “I don’t want somebody like that being my mayor.”

Bland said McQuisten could have avoided the conflict by returning his phone calls.

“I just wanted a call,” he said. “If she had just called me back, none of this would have happened. I really just wanted to talk to her about the party.”

Bland means the Baker County Republican Party, for which McQuisten is an elected precinct committee person.

Bland has also sought to talk to McQuisten about her decision to not support Randy Daugherty’s application to fill a vacancy on the City Council.

In an Oct. 5 email to Bland, McQuisten wrote: “I have certainly not defamed you by attempting to follow the proper City process ... I think we are clear now that gathering my private information online, publishing the source in the paper so others could obtain my private information, or repeatedly calling on my personal cell phone at home are not appropriate. Thanks in advance for honoring that.”

In the Oct. 5 email, McQuisten explained why she

mentioned Bland’s voice mails to Cannon.

“It is my job to bring concerns about any of our board or committee members to the council as a body to handle properly; however, as I mentioned multiple times (as was the reason for my not once mentioning your name or the issue specifics publicly) my desire was the quickest, most discrete resolution during which you would have been involved.”

McQuisten mentioned the voice mails during a Council work session Sept. 23, but she didn’t refer to Bland by name.

McQuisten also brought the issue to City Manager Jon Cannon, who listened to Bland’s voice mails. Cannon subsequently sent an email on Sept. 24 to the five other City Council members in which he outlined what the mayor had told him.

In the email, Cannon wrote that McQuisten had told him Bland had called her on her city-issued phone and on her personal cellphone, although she had asked him not to use her personal number.

“She expressed concerns because the phone messages sound as though Mr. Bland has slurred speech and may be drunk or impaired,” Cannon wrote in the email to councilors. “I have heard three of the messages and can confirm in two of them the speech is slurred and certainly sounds as though some sort of impairment is apparent.”

Cannon also referred in the email to McQuisten’s allegation that Bland instigated a “social media smear campaign” against city councilor Lynette Perry, who resigned in August due to health issues, and that McQuisten “believed him (Bland) to be drunk at the launch of that campaign as well.”

Bland denies that allegation.

Cannon’s email continues: “The Mayor expressed concerns about Mr. Bland serving on the Budget Board if he does have a drinking problem and is taking action against councilors and calling her personal phone while impaired.”

Cannon’s email lists five potential options for councilors “in no particular order.”

- Take no action.
- Discuss the issue in a Council meeting
- Replace Mr. Bland on the Budget Board
- Instruct staff to research additional information

• Individually meet with Mr. Bland to discuss the situation.”

Later that day — Sept. 24 — Bland phoned Cannon to explain his medical condition and to refute McQuisten’s claims.

Cannon then sent a second email to councilors, about two and a half hours after the first, noting what Bland had said in the phone call.

“He informed me that he suffers from a medical condition that slurs his speech,” Cannon wrote in the second email. “He indicated that he does not drink but sometimes when he speaks his speech slurs. His condition became apparent as we were having a conversation on the phone.”

“He wanted it to be very clear to City Council that he is interested in serving the city and considers himself an upright and respectable citizen here in Baker City,” Cannon wrote in the second email, referring to Bland. “He intently shared his desire to assist and do what’s right on the budget board and for the city.”

“He indicated that he is trying to reach the mayor to discuss the applicant Randy Daugherty (Daugherty) for City Council. He indicated he found her phone numbers on truepeople.com”

McQuisten responded to

Cannon’s second Sept. 24 email, following his phone conversation with Bland, writing: “Thank you for letting us know. The cyberstalking and bizarre calls at my home were creepy at best.”

Bland said he hand-delivered a letter to McQuisten during the Council’s Sept. 28 meeting, in which he accuses the mayor of defaming him.

“I demand that you immediately cease and desist from making any and all false and defamatory statements against me,” Bland wrote in the letter to McQuisten. “I also demand that you publish a retraction of all these false statements in the form of an email to me, Mr. Cannon and all City Council Members by October 6, 2021. If you do not cease and desist immediately, and if you do not provide a retraction by October 6, 2021, I may be forced to take appropriate legal action against you and seek all available damages and remedies.”

Bland said in a phone interview Tuesday afternoon that he was upset that McQuisten, after receiving Cannon’s second email, explaining the source of Bland’s slurred speech, failed to concede that she was wrong in assuming Bland was intoxicated.

Instead, Bland noted, McQuisten repeated her accusation that Bland had engaged in cyberstalking and described his actions as “bizarre” and “creepy at best.”

In his letter to McQuisten, Bland addressed those claims.

“I do not know what you mean by ‘cyberstalking,’ but I do not engage in any stalking behaviors,” Bland wrote. “That you find phone calls from constituents asking for information ‘bizarre’ and ‘creepy at best’ is unacceptable. As an elected official, a County Republican Precinct Committee Person, and a candidate for governor, please respond to a constituent’s inquiries rather than defame them — especially after their disability is revealed.”

Oregonians will get 17% of their 2020 state income taxes back

By **BETSY HAMMOND**
The Oregonian

Oregonians will get 17% of their 2020 Oregon income taxes back as a kicker credit when they file their 2021 taxes next year, the Oregon Department of Revenue announced Tuesday, Oct. 12. Revenue officials deter-

mined more than a month ago that Oregon’s unique kicker rebate law would generate a jaw-dropping \$1.9 billion. But they needed to finalize and certify exactly how much each tax filer would be entitled to.

The official answer is 17.341% of 2020 state income

taxes paid. Taxpayers can find their 2020 tax liability on line 22 of their 2020 Form OR.

Oregonians get a kicker rebate when the state’s revenue exceeds by 2% or more what state forecasters projected far ahead of time. No other state has a similar law.

People who paid 2020 Oregon income taxes can file for and receive the credit in 2022, even if they don’t owe Oregon

taxes on their 2021 income. If you owe the state money, whether for back taxes or for other items such as

court fines or child support, however, the state may use all or part of your kicker that debt first.

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