

Baker City Herald

October 30, 2021

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QUICK HITS

Good Day Wish To A Subscriber

A special good day to Herald subscriber Pat Braswell of Baker City.

Local, A2

LA GRANDE — Supply chain issues gripping the nation have found a new, unexpected victim — local schools.

BRIEFING

Haines Fire Protection District meeting Nov. 8

The Haines Fire Protection District's board of directors will have its monthly meeting on Nov. 8 at 7 p.m. at the main fire station, 816 Cole St. in Haines. All residents in the district are welcome to attend. COVID-19 protocols will be in effect.

Soil, water districts set meetings during November

Baker County's four soil and water conservation districts have scheduled call-in meetings during November. To receive details for calling in to any of the meetings, call 541-519-2496. The meeting schedule:

- Burnt River, Nov. 2, 5:30 p.m.
- Baker Valley, Nov. 4, noon
- Eagle Valley, Nov. 15, noon
- Keating, Nov. 16, noon

WEATHER

Today

54 / 31
Sunny



Sunday

54 / 33
Partly sunny



Monday

57 / 39
Rain showers



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



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

This view from a drone shows the intersection of 10th Street, Hughes Lane (to the right) and Pocahontas Road (to the left).

10th Street improvement plan progressing

Project also includes sections of Hughes Lane, Cedar Street, Pocahontas Road

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
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Baker City officials are continuing preparations for a major project to improve traffic flow, including bicycles and pedestrians, on sections of 10th Street, Hughes Lane and Cedar Street.

The Northern Baker Transportation Improvement Plan focuses on these street sections:

- 10th Street from Hughes Lane to Broadway Street
- Cedar Street from Hughes Lane to Campbell Street
- Hughes Lane from 10th Street to Cedar Street
- Pocahontas Road from 10th Street to 17th Street/Chico Street

The project is still in the planning stage, said Michelle Owen, Baker City's public works director.

"This is kind of a concept plan, it's a 20-year plan," Owen said. "We're going to have some money in 2024 to actually implement some of this plan. We do have some House bill funding that came through

that's allocated to some of these projects."

One of the more contentious proposals unveiled earlier in the process was the potential to change the lane striping on 10th Street from the current four-lane configuration, with two travel lanes in each direction, to three lanes, with one travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane.

That's the design in place on Campbell Street from Main Street east.

The current proposal retains the current four-lane striping on 10th Street.

"I think the biggest point of discussion over the course of this is the four-lane, three-lane thing for 10th street and clearly there was support for keeping four lanes," Owen said. "We had support for both but there was more support for keeping four lanes on 10th Street."

Owen said 10th Street would have crosswalks along with curb extensions at several intersections to shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians.

Gretchen Stadler, a member of the advisory committee for the project, said the committee met recently with three members of the Baker City Council and Bill

Harvey, chairman of the Baker County Board of Commissioners, along with officials from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).

During that meeting the issue of the lane striping on 10th Street was a topic of discussion, Stadler said.

"ODOT was presenting information about the difference in safety and showing from studies that had been done that a three-lane is a safer option," Stadler said. "But the council members who were in attendance and Mr. Harvey felt strongly, even coming into the meeting, that a four-lane road was the only thing that was going to work."

Stadler said that although some residents oppose the three-lane configuration on 10th Street because they don't like that set up on Campbell, 10th Street is actually wider than Campbell, so the comparison isn't necessarily appropriate.

Stadler said she's concerned that the elected officials haven't adequately considered the information that ODOT presented about the potential safety benefits of a three-lane configuration on 10th Street.

See, **Streets** / Page A3

Booster shots in demand

By JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker County officials are bracing for a rising demand for COVID-19 vaccinations.

But this time the interest is not so much in first or second doses, but third, or "booster" doses.

"People are wanting booster doses," said Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department.

The demand is driven by the Food and Drug Administration's Oct. 14 approval of booster shots of the Moderna vaccine, Staten said.

A large majority of the COVID-19 vaccine doses given in Baker County so far were the Moderna product.

See, **COVID** / Page A3

Jobless rate dips to pandemic low

By ALEX WITTWER

EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon is back on track to recovering jobs lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to state economists.

According to reports by regional economists Christopher Rich and Dallas Fridley at the Oregon Employment Department, unemployment rates have dipped to the lowest level since the pandemic began in the spring of 2020.

Union and Wallowa counties saw a 1.5% and 1.6% decrease in unemployment from September 2020 to September 2021, respectively, closing out with 5.3% and 5.4% total unemployment rates. Baker County saw a 2.2% drop during the same period, from 7.1% to 4.9%, the largest drop of the Northeastern Oregon counties.

See, **Jobs** / Page A3

Northern lights could be visible tonight

By JAYSON JACOBY

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Lori Rowland is hoping one of nature's great light shows will make a rare appearance tonight, Oct. 30, in Baker County.

A geomagnetic storm on the sun could make the northern lights — aurora borealis — visible tonight in Baker County, said Rowland, a local photographer who captured images of the phenomenon earlier this month.

There are no guarantees, to be sure, in celestial matters.

But Rowland is excited about the potential.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Center, a coronal mass ejection on Oct. 28 could result in "elevated auroral activity" today extending into the morning of Oct. 31.

"The warning is a G3, a 'strong' watch level," according to the Space Weather Prediction Center.

The terrestrial weather also is promising.

The National Weather Service is forecasting mostly clear skies Saturday and Saturday night in Baker County.

Rowland recommends people who want to get a glimpse of the northern lights to find a vantage point away from city lights and with an unobstructed view to the north.

When she photographed the northern lights on Oct. 11 at Pilcher Creek Reservoir, west of North Powder, Rowland said she couldn't actually see the colors with her naked eye.

A 20-second exposure on her camera revealed the colors.

Man sentenced to 75 months in prison

By JAYSON JACOBY

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A Baker City man was sentenced to 75 months in state prison after pleading guilty to breaking into a Baker City home in September and stealing a handgun.

Alexander Prentice Griffin, 30, of Baker City, pleaded guilty on Oct. 14 to attempted first-degree robbery, a Class B felony.

Griffin was initially charged with first-degree robbery, a Measure 11 crime that on conviction carries a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 90 months.

The 75-month sentence for attempted robbery is not a mandatory minimum, and Griffin could potentially qualify for a reduction in the sentence.

Griffin also pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Several other counts were dismissed in a plea agreement with the district attorney's office. Those charges are first-degree burglary, first-degree theft, menacing, pointing a firearm at another and first-degree criminal trespassing.

A grand jury indicted Griffin on those charges based on an incident that happened Sept. 17 at Dennis Glerup's home at 1305 Seventh St.

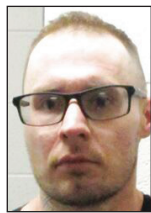
Glerup told police that when he returned home he found a person inside, wearing a mask. Glerup told police the person pointed at Glerup's head a .44 Magnum pistol that belongs to Glerup, then fled.

Baker City Police linked the Sept. 17 incident to a Sept. 15 burglary at a vacant home and shed at 2610 Clark St., where an estimated \$10,000 in tools, along with copper items, had been taken.

Police obtained a search warrant for a travel trailer parked at 2260 Wabash St. in south Baker City, where police believed Griffin was living. Police executed the search warrant the evening of Sept. 17 and found several items that had been stolen from the Clark Street home, and the gun stolen from Glerup's home earlier that day.

Police also found other items that they suspect were stolen elsewhere, possibly from local storage units over the past year. Police also found methamphetamine and "items indicative of drug trafficking," according to a press release from Baker City Police.

Police arrested Griffin the evening of Sept. 17. He was taken to the Baker County Jail on a parole violation charge. He had been released from the jail recently after spending three days there on a separate parole violation charge.



Griffin



TODAY
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TUESDAY — BAKER VOLLEYBALL TEAM SEEKS TO ADVANCE IN PLAYOFFS