

EDITORIAL

Warming shelter is needed

Outside, the sun was shining and the temperature was reaching a record-setting 54 degrees on Wednesday, Dec. 1, but inside the Baker County Courthouse, the three county commissioners were talking about the frigid nights that are certain to come as fall gives way to winter.

It was an important discussion.

And the commissioners' conclusion, that Baker City needs a temporary shelter where homeless residents can stay warm during those nights, is the correct one.

"We need to do something," Commissioner Bruce Nichols said.

Commission Chairman Bill Harvey took the initiative on the issue, including talking with officials at the warming center in La Grande.

Harvey proposed a two-pronged strategy — first, find a temporary site for a shelter for this winter, then look into a longer term facility.

Commissioners will, of course, need to coordinate with, among others, the Baker City Council and Police Department, New Directions Northwest and organizations such as the Northeast Oregon Compassion Center, The Salvation Army, and local churches.

Baker City Police Chief Ty Duby said last month that the city's homeless population has grown over the past few years. He cited his own observations, as well as reports from police officers and from the public.

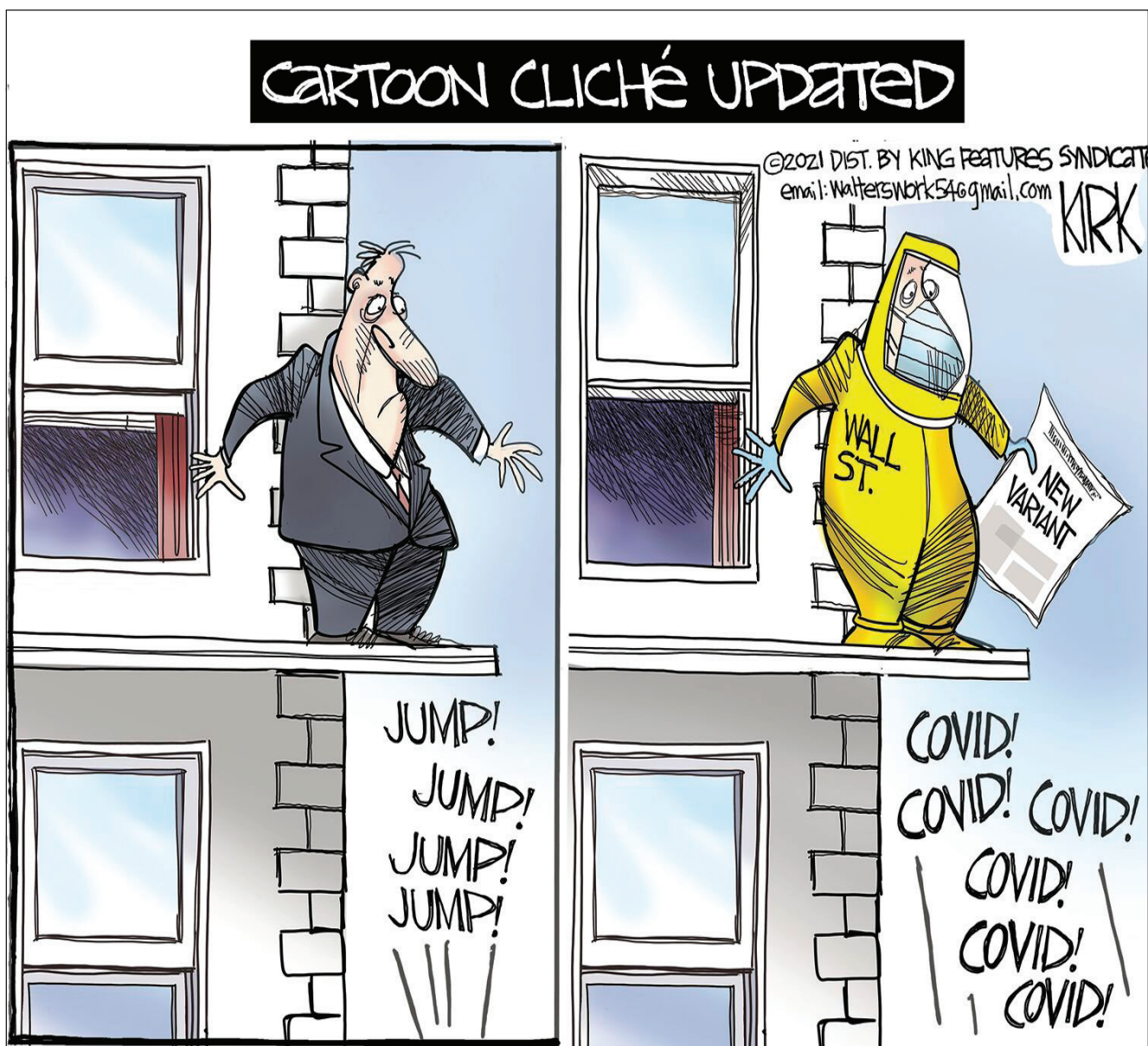
The homeless issue is complicated, to be sure.

Duby plans to ask the Baker City Council to approve an ordinance limiting where, and when, people can camp on public property. That's a reasonable thing to do.

But in Baker City, where temperatures plummet below zero almost every winter — and not infrequently dip to 10 below or lower — offering homeless residents a warm place to sleep is, ultimately, a matter of humanity. The community can't force people to come in out of the cold, of course, but we should try to make sure there is an option.

Baker City and Baker County have limited financial resources. As commissioners discussed Wednesday, local officials need to seek state or federal help for this worthwhile endeavor.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

It's time we really understood gun violence

In my younger days I spent a lot of time hunting, everything from elk and deer to game birds. Now thanks to COVID and age I have to watch hunting shows like "Meat Eater." What a life. This guy travels all over the United states hunting. One week he might be in Colorado hunting elk and the next few weeks he might chase giant mule deer bucks in Montana or maybe pheasants in South Dakota. I have a nephew who went to Wyoming hunting antelope. Others have gone to the Dakotas to hunt pheasants. My son is a horn hunter and has gone to Nevada to hunt mule deer. One time on a cast and blast in the Snake River while fishing and watching for chukars he spotted a nice Idaho buck and traded the shotgun for a rifle and headed up after him.

One common theme from the ballistics-impaired on CNN and other left wing "media" after the Rittenhouse verdict was "he crossed state lines with a gun." All those I mentioned above cross state lines with a gun. Got an out-of-state tag? Load up the gear and the guns and get going. No checkpoints at the border, because there are no laws about transporting firearms across state lines in the United States. The only borders you have to worry about are ones to the north called Canada and to the south called Mexico. Canadians, being descendants of British loyalists, don't

like handguns but if you want to spend some big bucks hunting moose you can go in with a rifle. Mexico doesn't allow private citizens to own firearms unless you belong to a cartel.

There is one exception that hinders transporting a firearm. If I go to the VA hospital I can't have a firearm, even in my car. Guess they are afraid of those who preserved their freedom with a gun. A class action lawsuit is overdue, especially in light of a Supreme Court decision that said a homeless man could have a gun in his tent.

The left is having a meltdown after Rittenhouse. You have a right to defend your life! What's next? The right to defend your home or property?

Space limits a lot more of what I have to say. I could cover the 1934 Federal Firearms Act that unconstitutionally banned fully automatics. Since then the rate of fire on any gun is one projectile per trigger pull. Full autos only exist in Hollywood. An exception to this is the smooth bore shotgun which can hold anywhere from nine to a dozen or so peewee marble sized shot to more than a hundred BB sized shot to many more smaller shot. No rifling in the barrel, untraceable. So Democrats better get some checkpoints in place and ban the shotgun. Move on. Send some men with guns to confront men with guns. It's time to really understand gun violence.

Steve Culley
La Grande

Impressed by Keating, and Baker Early Learning Center

As a retired teacher, I loved the story, "Kids Are The Cooks," describing the creative ways Keating Elementary staff reimagined a new way to continue their annual Thanksgiving Day feast. My favorite quote was from a kindergartner who said: "I've never gotten to open a can before." It reminded me of why I loved working with children. Their joy in any new experience is so magical!

And speaking of magical! I was recently given a tour of the new Baker Early Learning Center and what Angela Lattin and her team have accomplished there blew my mind! I was the director of Head Start in Baker and Union counties in the mid-80s, so I have some understanding of what it would take to bring all those agencies serving young children together under one roof. The sharing of knowledge, staff, materials and other resources is so amazing and I was very impressed. It seemed like every need that a young child, or their family, might have could be addressed in one location. What a wonderful resource for our community. Good job to all the staff at Keating Elementary and Baker Early Learning Center. I know how hard your job is and you are all doing it so well. Bless you!

Pat Brougham
Baker City

Poachers steal from hunters — and everyone else

They're called poachers but it seems to me that they're just common thieves.

No different from the cretins who wrestle purses away from elderly women, or slink off porches clutching boxes that contain Christmas presents for toddlers.

Although I suppose it's reasonable to have a specific term for criminals whose thefts involve killing an animal, which, unlike a purse or a gift box, can't be replaced.

Oregon State Police, whose duties include catching poachers as well as nabbing highway speeders, occasionally send press releases regarding recent poaching cases.

I find these interesting to read. And depressing.

These press releases often are accompanied by photographs which, though generally not terribly bloody or otherwise graphic, strike me as inexpressibly sad.

A picture of a discarded deer or elk carcass conveys the concept of waste with a cruel efficiency.

Although I'm loathe to suggest that there ought to be a spectrum of poachers, the cases that bother me most are those in which the animal

was killed either for no apparent reason or for its antlers or horns.

I certainly don't condone poaching for any reason. But a poacher who at least takes the meat, and presumably eats it, seems to me slightly (very slightly) less obnoxious than one who simply wants a trophy to hang on his wall.

Which is to say, sustenance trumps vanity.

(Not that I believe anyone, given the availability of food stamps and other programs, both public and private, truly needs to poach animals to keep their bellies full.)

The most recent OSP press release described two cases of the latter sort. Both happened in Grant County and the two crimes apparently happened within less than 24 hours spanning Nov. 9 and 10.

One case involved the headless carcass of a mule deer buck that a resident found at 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 9 along Highway 26 near Mount Vernon. According to OSP, the person had seen a buck with distinctive, massive antlers near the site about 9:30 a.m. that day. The person gave police a photograph of the buck taken that morning.



JAYSON JACOBY

The press release stated that the carcass showed no signs of having been hit by a car. Its head had been cut off near the shoulder.

Later on Nov. 10, OSP fish and wildlife officers got another report of a dead, trophy mule deer buck, this one near Crazy Creek and Dark Canyon in the Murderers Creek unit.

The person who found the carcass — the head, with its fine set of antlers, still intact — told police the buck was still warm and flexible when found at 11 a.m. that day.

The press release cited witnesses who had seen a "dark-colored Dodge pickup" in the area several times.

The press release about the two Grant County cases arrived in my inbox a couple weeks after another, also from OSP, that described three poaching cases west of the Cascades, one involving a deer, the two others elk.

The release noted that the Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) was offering a reward of \$500 for information leading to an arrest in the deer poaching, and \$1,500 in each of the elk cases.

The OHA handed out more than \$20,000 in rewards from its TIP — Turn In Poachers — fund in 2020, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife awarded 135 hunter preference points, which are offered as an alternative to cash rewards.

(Preference points increase the chances that a hunter will receive a hunting tag through the state's lottery system.)

It is of course understandable that ethical, responsible hunters — and the OHA is made up of just that sort — would be keen to catch poachers and to discourage others from following their larcenous lead.

But it's not only hunters who lose due to poachers' misdeeds.

Wildlife in Oregon belongs to all of us — those who have a hankering for a hunk of backstrap, and those who don't care for venison, or even for hunting, but who like to photograph animals or merely

appreciate the chance to watch a buck amble across a mountain meadow.

I used to think of poachers as not so much different from people who litter compulsively.

And indeed there is a commonality — both are, at their core, selfish, their actions so senseless that thoughtful people struggle to understand what could possibly motivate them.

But as much as littering incenses me — it requires, if anything, more effort to toss a can or paper sack out of a car window than to leave it on the floor — poaching, it seems to me on reflection, is a decidedly more noxious act.

Littering is ugly.

But killing an animal is stealing from all of us, those who carry rifles and those who wield only cameras.

Besides which, poachers are themselves guilty of littering.

Except their detritus, rotting in a barrow pit or field or forest glen, is not as easy to clean up as a fast food bag.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.