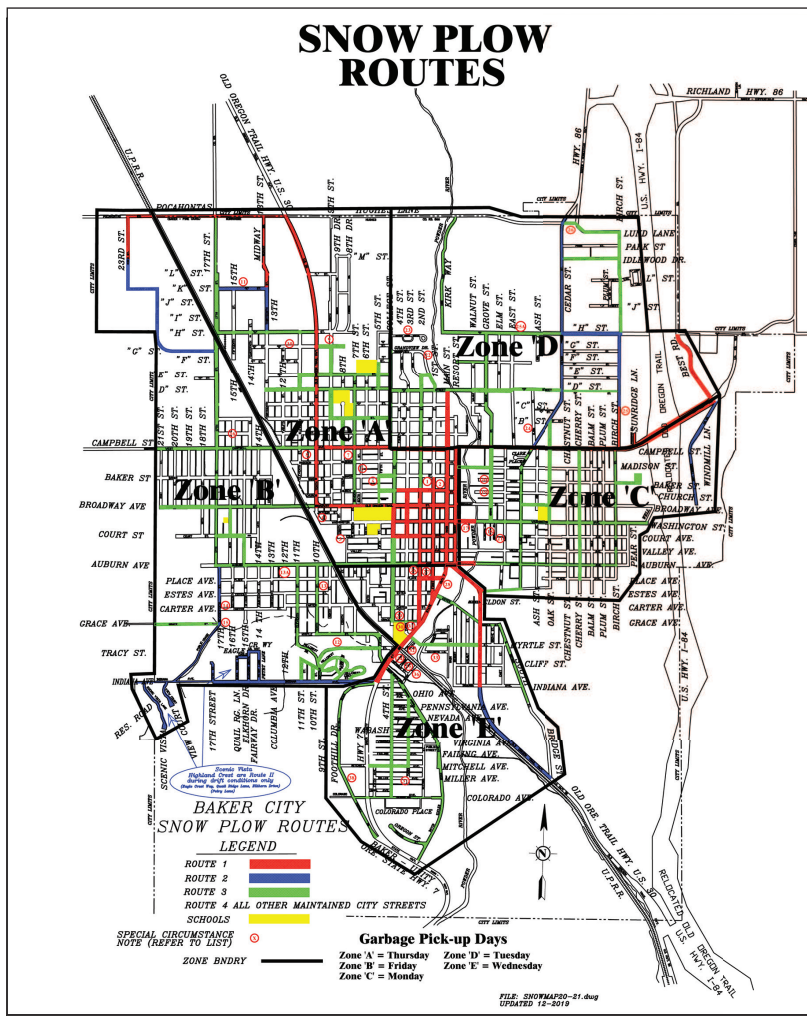


Snow

Continued from A1

Without the jet stream to shove storms through, the snow-producing front has been parked across Eastern Oregon for most of the week. When the front is north of Baker City, the winds tend to blow from the south, bringing slightly warmer air, Breidenbach said. When the front moves the opposite direction and dives south of Baker City, the wind direction shifts, with northerly winds ushering in colder air. This fluctuating pattern played out earlier in the week. On Tuesday, Jan. 4, the front, pushed north toward Washington. The temperature at the Baker City Airport rose to 35 degrees — the warmest so far in 2022 — about 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 5. But then the front reversed course, passing through Baker County

again and prompting north winds that cooled the temperature to 31 degrees at 9 a.m. The front isn't finished, though. Breidenbach said it will move north again, this time bringing even warmer air from the south. Temperatures in Baker City are forecast to rise into the low 40s on Thursday, Jan. 5 and Friday, Jan. 6. Over the weekend a major change in the pattern is likely, he said, with a ridge of high pressure replacing the low pressure trough that has dominated the first week of the new year. "The ridge will put an end to the stormy pattern," Breidenbach said. The shift also likely will result in a temperature inversion, with colder air trapped in Baker and other valleys, potentially leading to fog. Breidenbach said the ridge could persist for a week or longer, with little chance of precipitation.



Snowplow priority map for Baker City.

Witham

Continued from A1

Witham said she worries about the long-term effects on children of mask requirements. She said she is also troubled by people losing their jobs due to the vaccine mandate. Witham said that although she lacks experience as an elected official, she believes she's well-positioned to represent county residents due to her familiarity with the county, its history, customs and culture.

"I know so many people and businesses and issues in the county just through my work over the last three decades," she said. Witham, who was born in Baker City, moved away with her family in 1976, when she was a second-grader, and then returned during her senior year in high school. She's been here since. Although Witham emphasizes that she's not a politician, she has experience in political advocacy, most notably as a supporter of maintaining access for motor vehicles to the Wallowa-Whitman National For-

est and other public land in the county. Witham is a longtime member of a local group of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts who use local roads and trails and also have hosted many events to clean up trash on public lands. Witham said she believes natural resource issues will continue to be vital to Baker County, including forest management. "Our forests need help," she said, citing recent large wildfires in and around the county. About half of Baker County's 2 million acres is public

land, managed by either the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. Witham said that if she's elected she's eager to confront a new challenge. "I do look forward to diving into it — I think it's an interesting position," she said. "I want to come at it with a commonsense approach. I don't have an agenda. My agenda is the people of the county, and that's it." Witham pointed out that although this has no influence on her decision to run, she would be, if elected, the county's first female commissioner.

Cattle

Continued from A2

"They were all acclimated to this climate, but not all acclimated to this specific terrain. Some do not know how to navigate canyons, so they have wandered in the wrong direction as we searched for them and brought in other groups. New cows are more difficult to gather than cows that have run on the same range for several consecutive years and know the way home. These cows are not calving in the snow; the ranch's fall calving season was October through November. When we began gathering in September, there were 1,613 mother cows on summer range." He acknowledged bovine casualties in the recovery efforts. "Despite the efforts of our crew and the community, 10 cows have been found unrecoverable," he said, adding that "1,548 Dean Oregon Ranches mother cows were successfully gathered by Dean Oregon Ranches crew before the snow. After the snow, 34 mother cows have been gathered through the joint efforts of our crew and the community. Of those, 26 were Dean Oregon Ranches cattle; the others were owned by neighboring ranches." Warnock expressed his gratitude to fellow ranchers assisting in the recovery. "We truly appreciate the effort the community has shown in this final push to gather the remaining cows," he said. "We plan to continue aerial searches and hope to bring in the majority of the remaining 29 mother cows."

takes in a large area — 72,000 acres — known as the Marr Flat Grazing Allotment. They had a viable permit to go on sometime in the spring. They were supposed to have all cattle removed according to the Forest Service permit. By the 15th of October, there were still cattle that remained out there and are in very deep snow, some of them have expired. There is a rescue effort being made right now to try and rescue as many as possible. We've committed county resources to it. There've been a number of people who have volunteered or have contributed time. There's been helicopters that have flown feed into some that were extremely isolated and the rescue continues. Those are the basic facts that I do know." Nash went on to specify the county resources. "The Road Department cleared about 10 miles of road in a heavy snowfall area on the Upper Innaha," he said. "They cleared about 90 trees out of the road. Compounding the heavy snowfall that came all at once, we had an event where we had rain and heavy snowfall afterward. There are trees across a lot of the access roads that they're trying to get down right now that has exasperated those efforts to try to extricate the cattle from their situation." He was unsure how many cattle were involved, but was aware some had young calves. Rancher Casey Tippett said he called the Forest Service in November after hearing reports from hunters that cattle were on land where they weren't supposed to be, but he never heard back from the federal agency. "Those cattle should've been taken off that land a long time ago," Tippett said Dec. 30. "When they take strange cattle to an allotment, when winter hits they don't know how to get out. The people who know that country should've been getting them out."

hero in all of this," she said of the Joseph construction contractor. "It was Adam Stein who got the ball rolling." She said he started gathering people to help after viewing the cattle from the air. Warnock added his take on Stein's assistance. "I contacted Adam Stein to fly for the ranch and flew with him to look for cows multiple times," Warnock said. "I am very thankful we reached out to Adam — he has been awesome through all this and his expertise in the snow and in the air has been an invaluable resource." Nash said various agencies have been apprised of the situation, ready to lend what aid they could. He said the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are aware, as well as others. "I've had some discussion with the Oregon Department of Agriculture on this situation," he said. "They're the ones with the Brand Department a lot of the (state laws) concerning the current situation." Peter Fargo, public affairs officer for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest based in Baker City, said in an email Dec. 31 that the county, the sheriff's office and volunteers not only had been rescuing cattle, they "have been hauling hay and water with snowmobiles, side-by-sides and helicopters. The priority of the operation is first on everyone's

safety and then saving as many cattle as possible." He said the Forest Service instructed the permittee and ranch manager to remove all the cattle in October. Fargo estimated there were an estimated 70 head of cattle still on the allotment Dec. 21 and as of Dec. 30, there were up to 25 animals still unaccounted for. Tom Birkmaier, president of Wallowa County Stockgrowers, said he has heard the numbers are higher, but couldn't say exactly how many. But mostly it's people in Wallowa County who are getting out the effort to rescue the stranded cattle and calves. "There's a lot of people who are quite concerned," Nash said. Birkmaier, who ranches on Crow Creek where he and wife, Kelly, have been caring for some of the rescued calves, was emphatic in his concern for the situation. "Several factors created near perfect storm that led to an unfortunate series of event impacting a group of cattle in southern Wallowa County. Apparent mismanagement, extreme weather events and lactating cows with young calves all played a part," Birkmaier said. "Over 40 folks nearly all volunteers, mostly led by Adam Stein's common sense and tireless commitment both in the air and on the ground have been working the past 10 days on an incredible rescue of many livestock."

Taxes

Continued from A1

The six-year average is 87.9%, Durlflinger said. Property tax bills were mailed in late October 2021. Durlflinger said the county received one letter from a property owner who withheld paying taxes as a protest against the governor's vaccine mandate. That property owner had two separate properties, however, and the withheld payment, for about \$200, was less than the taxes for the other parcel. The tax for that property was paid by the owner's lender, and was made automatically, Durlflinger said. She said her office also received one phone call from a resident who expressed opposition to the vaccine mandate. The county typically receives a majority of the property taxes it levies before the end of the year. Property owners who pay their full bill by Nov. 15 receive a 3% discount. Those who pay at least two-thirds of their bill by Nov. 15 receive a 2% discount.

county commissioners approved a resolution stating as much in late September 2021. Brown wrote that the purpose of Operation Boston Tea Party was intended to support emergency workers, not to defund city and county services. "I can't emphasize enough that it wasn't to defund our emergency services, but rather, to make a statement that if we lost half of our rural fire emergency personnel, as was being talked about as well as others in law enforcement and medical services, then why would we continue to pay?" Brown wrote. "What were we funding? This was being done to put pressure on the county commissioners to stand by the people instead of buckling to pressure from Salem." Brown noted that County Commissioner Mark Bennett stated, during a Dec. 15 commissioners meeting, that property taxes bring in about \$6 million of an annual county budget of about \$42 million. "Many residents of the county took his comment to mean that we will always be second to the demands of Salem and DC," Brown wrote. Property taxes are a significant source of revenue for Baker City's budget. The city receives about \$3.6 million per year in property taxes, and the largest share of that money, almost \$3 million for the current fiscal year that started July 1, 2021, goes to the general fund. That fund includes the police and fire departments. Most of the rest of the city's share of property taxes is used for street maintenance. Baker City Manager Jonathan Cannon said in early October 2021, after Baker County United began distributing the flier encouraging people to withhold property taxes, that a significant reduction in property tax revenue would force the city to cut services, potentially including police and fire, that residents have come to depend on. Baker County United's Dec. 30 newsletter urges property owners, when they pay their property taxes, to include a letter or email to the three county commissioners "explaining that you are paying in protest and express your support for Baker County declaring itself a constitutional county." Baker County United representatives attended the commissioners' Dec. 15 meeting and called on them to pass a resolution declaring Baker County a "constitutional county." The resolution states, among other things, that "all actions by the federal government and its agents will conform strictly and implicitly with the principles expressed within the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights." County commissioners took no action Dec. 15, but they scheduled a work session for Jan. 12 to continue the discussion. Baker County United's Dec. 30 newsletter encourages people to attend the Jan. 12 session "to show us and the county commissioners that they must uphold their oaths and adopt this resolution."

County involved
At an emergency meeting of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners on an unrelated matter Dec. 30, Nash — who is a rancher and president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association — said information on the situation at present was limited. "The things we do know is that this was a Forest Service permit for the Upper Big Sheep Creek and the Upper Innaha," Nash said after the meeting. "It

est and other public land in the county. Witham is a longtime member of a local group of four-wheel-drive enthusiasts who use local roads and trails and also have hosted many events to clean up trash on public lands. Witham said she believes natural resource issues will continue to be vital to Baker County, including forest management. "Our forests need help," she said, citing recent large wildfires in and around the county. About half of Baker County's 2 million acres is public

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VOTE! May 2022 Primary Election

CHRISTINA WITHAM
Baker County Commissioner
Position 2

I am a native of Baker City, wife of 33 years to Russ who is currently the ODOT Coordinator at the Baker Facility. Our son is USMC Sergeant Elijah Witham. He resides in Caldwell, ID with his wife Paige.

I have owned businesses in Baker City for the past three decades, currently, Oregon Sign Company, LLC.

Because I am passionate about all things Baker County and all of the opportunities and history that it has to offer, I am running for the Commissioner's seat that is being vacated by Mark Bennett in 2022. I ask for your vote.

I stand for the use of our natural resources, recreation and access to our public lands. I support the hardworking ranchers, farmers, miners and timber workers who are vital to our economy.

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