

Local

BAKER COUNTY CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12

Baker County Board of Commissioners: 11:30 a.m. special session at the Baker County Event Center at the Fairgrounds, 2600 East St. Commissioners will discuss a proposed “constitutional county” resolution. Commissioners will also have a work session at 5 p.m. at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St., to discuss the North Baker Transportation Improvement Plan.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

50 YEARS AGO

from the *Democrat-Herald*
January 10, 1972

The city council passed a motion last night to sign a resolution to authorize the mayor and city recorder to sign an agreement with the state highway commission to construct a traffic light at 10th and C streets. The city will pay one-quarter of the \$7,000 project which will amount to two lights, one on each side of the street.

25 YEARS AGO

from the *Baker City Herald*
January 10, 1997

Last week’s floods and mudslides caused an estimated \$443,000 in damage in Baker County.

That preliminary tally doesn’t include damage to Highway 86 between Halfway and Oxbow, or to Idaho Power Company property in Hells Canyon, said Rena’ Morrow, the county’s program manager for emergency management.

10 YEARS AGO

from the *Baker City Herald*
January 11, 2012

Jerry Welch isn’t used to seeing the parking lot of his business, Halfway Motels, empty during the second week of January.

Empty of cars and of snow.

The absence of the latter has a lot to do with the former.

“The lack of snowmobiling is kind of killing us,” Welch said Tuesday. “Usually every weekend our parking lot is full and cars are lined up along the street.”

ONE YEAR AGO

from the *Baker City Herald*
January 12, 2021

Four of Baker City’s six newly elected city councilors will be sworn in this afternoon on the front steps of City Hall, three hours before their first official meeting begins.

The two others are slated to be sworn in during the meeting this evening.

Councilors Johnny Waggoner Sr., Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon and Kerry McQuisten will be sworn in at 4 p.m. on the front steps at City Hall, 1655 First St.

Councilors Heather Sells and Jason Spriet will be sworn in at the start of the Council’s regular meeting starting at 7 p.m., also at City Hall.

Spriet is the lone incumbent among the six councilors elected on Nov. 3.

The six will join incumbent Lynette Perry to comprise the seven-member City Council. Perry is in the middle of a four-term term and was not up for reelection.

The four councilors who will be sworn in this afternoon requested that option so their family and friends could attend since it will happen outside.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, attendance inside City Hall is limited, and people are required to wear face masks.

OREGON LOTTERY

MEGABUCKS, JAN. 8

2-6-15-22-43-46

Next jackpot: \$8.1 million

POWERBALL, JAN. 8

20-21-36-60-65 PB 13

Next jackpot: \$27 million

MEGA MILLIONS, JAN. 7

7-29-43-56-57 Mega 6

Next jackpot: \$300 million

WIN FOR LIFE, JAN. 8

10-11-16-55

PICK 4, JAN. 9

• 1 p.m.: 4-5-9-6

• 4 p.m.: 4-4-1-7

• 7 p.m.: 8-4-9-2

• 10 p.m.: 4-4-7-9

LUCKY LINES, JAN. 9

1-7-10-13-18-22-27-32

Next jackpot: \$73,000

SENIOR MENUS

WEDNESDAY: Turkey a la king over a biscuit, mixed vegetables, fruit cup, cinnamon rolls

THURSDAY: Chicken broccoli fettuccine, zucchini and tomatoes, garlic bread, three-bean salad, bread pudding

FRIDAY: Chicken fried steak with mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, rolls, ambrosia, cookies

MONDAY (Jan. 17): Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

TUESDAY (Jan. 18): Baked ham, candied yams, mixed vegetables, rolls, fruit cup, cheesecake

WEDNESDAY (Jan. 19): Meatloaf, red potatoes, peas, rolls, pasta salad, cinnamon rolls

Public luncheon at the Senior Center, 2810 Cedar St., from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; \$5 donation (60 and older), \$7.50 for those under 60.

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Officials mull future of John Day Police Dept.

City suspended police operations Oct. 12, 2021, due to lack of money

BY BENNETT HALL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — After a two-month stalemate, discussions have finally begun between city and county officials about how to fill the void left by the shutdown of the John Day Police Department in mid-October.

A day after the City Council’s Oct. 12 vote to suspend operations of the financially strapped police department, City Manager Nick Green went to a session of the Grant County Court to propose a fund exchange: The city would give the county \$300,000 a year from its general fund for law enforcement services if the county would give the city an equal amount from its road fund for street improvements in John Day.

To date, there has been no formal response from the county, while the Grant County Sheriff’s Office bears the burden of policing John Day with no budget support to hire additional staff.

Meanwhile, the issue of law enforcement funding has continued to fester. It came up again at the Dec. 14 meeting of the City Council, which must decide whether to accept a \$375,000 federal policing grant and reconstitute the city’s police force or, if the grant terms allow, pass the money on to the Sheriff’s Office.



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle, File

A sign in John Day supports voting to approve a five-year levy to fund the John Day Police Department. The Aug. 17, 2021, ballot measure, which required a double majority, failed due to low turnout even though it got more yes votes than no votes.

A number of councilors voiced their frustration with the county’s silence on the fund exchange proposal, while Sheriff Todd McKinley urged both sides to come to the table and discuss how to pay for law enforcement services going forward.

“I think these two bodies are going to have to solve it,” McKinley told the council, “and that’s what they were elected to do.”

Shortly after the meeting, the sheriff reached out to the county’s elected leadership.

“I sent an email to the commissioners and the judge and just said, ‘Come on, guys, we’ve got to get moving on this,’” McKinley told the Eagle.

Some city and county officials, it appears, were already thinking along the same lines.

The day after the Dec. 14 council meeting, County

Commissioner Sam Palmer had a conversation with his old friend Gregg Haberly, a city councilor.

“(Haberly) said, ‘Look, we’ve got to do something,’” Palmer recalled.

That got the ball rolling.

At Palmer’s request, McKinley put together a preliminary funding plan to provide law enforcement services to the city of John Day in addition to patrolling the rest of Grant County – a 4,500-square-mile area that the Sheriff’s Office covers with just four patrol deputies.

McKinley declined to disclose precise dollar figures until the plan has been reviewed by the county’s attorney, but he said the proposal involves the city transferring the federal policing grant and providing enough additional money to hire three more deputies and one clerical worker.

“Those three deputies would be enough to cover what needs covered,” he said.

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COVID

Continued from A1

Case counts dropped substantially through autumn, with 168 during October, 143 in November, and 106 during December (the fewest since July 2021).

But over the past 10 days or so, with the omicron variant, which experts say is much more contagious but less virulent than delta, as the dominant variant, case counts have risen significantly across Oregon.

With 103 cases during the first nine days of January, Baker County has nearly reached the total for December’s 31 days.

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has not reported any COVID-19-related deaths in Baker County residents during January.

The death toll during December was three, following four deaths in November, five in October and six, the most in any month during the pandemic, in September.

Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, is encouraging residents to be vaccinated, including receiving a booster dose. Everyone age 12 and older is eligible for a booster.

Staten pointed to data showing that people who are fully

vaccinated are less likely to be hospitalized or have severe symptoms if they’re infected with the omicron variant.

Omicron is causing a higher percentage of breakthrough cases — infections in fully vaccinated people — than delta did.

The Health Department, with assistance from OHA, has scheduled a drive-thru vaccination clinic on Thursday, Jan. 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Baker County Fairgrounds, 2600 East St. (north of Campbell Street).

The clinic is open to everyone age 5 and older, and all three vaccines — Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson — will be available.

Paperwork can be printed and completed in advance at bakercountycovid19.com under “vaccine information.”

People who can’t attend the Jan. 13 clinic can call the Health Department at 541-523-8211, or their health care provider to ask about an appointment to receive a vaccine.

Baker County, as has been the case for more than two months, has the fifth-lowest vaccination rate among Oregon’s 36 counties, with 55.1% of residents 18 and older having had at least one dose.

The statewide average is 81.1%.

News of Record

FUNERAL PENDING

Janice Gyllenberg: A celebration of Janice’s life will take place Saturday, Jan. 22, at 1 p.m. at the Baker City Church of the Nazarene, 1250 Hughes Lane. Friends are invited to join the family for a dinner reception immediately following the service at the Family Life Center adjacent to the Nazarene Church. For those who would like to make a donation in Janice’s memory, the family suggests the Nazarene Compassion Center either online at <http://neoregoncompassioncenter.org> or through Tami’s Pine Valley Funeral Home, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences can be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com.

POLICE LOG

Baker City Police

Arrests, citations

PAROLE VIOLATION: Jeremy Jay Jones, 49, 8:04 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8, at Auburn Avenue and First Street; jailed.

PROBATION VIOLATION: Kimberly Ann Kirby, 24, Baker City, 6:10 p.m. Friday, Jan. 7, in the 800 block of Elm Street; jailed.

Baker County Sheriff’s Office

Arrests, citations

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF INTOXICANTS: Kaleb Edward White, 39, Haines, 2:16 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 9, on the Anthony Lakes Highway.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF INTOXICANTS: Shalon Diane Braswell, 43, Washington, 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8, on Interstate 84, Milepost 300 eastbound. UNAUTHORIZED USE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE: Brendon Michael Smith, 27, Baker City, 10:17 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 8, at the jail, where he was already in custody on other charges.

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Douglas (Skip/Skipper) Gail Smith

February 8, 1942 - January 4, 2022

On the afternoon of January 04, 2022 Douglas (Skip/Skipper) Gail Smith passed away at SCL Hospital in Miles City, MT. as a result of heart failure due to complications with COVID-19. Skip was 79 years old. Skip was born in the town of Malta in Phillips County, MT. on February 08, 1942. He was the eldest son of Gail and Myrtle Smith. He was raised in Phillips County, MT on the family farm. He attended Strater country school for his elementary education and attended public schools in Malta, MT.

When he was 18, he joined the US Navy and was stationed in Imperial Beach California where he served as a sonar technician in the airborne helicopter anti-submarine warfare unit. In the height of his military service aboard the aircraft carrier, USS Kearsarge, he was involved in two astronaut recovery missions for NASA. While serving in the US Navy he married his high school sweetheart of 59 years, Sharon Zabel, in July of 1962 in Malta, MT.

Upon leaving the service, he worked for a heating company in Grandview, WA for several years and then moved back to Malta, MT where he took a position as a police officer. He served there for a couple of years and then began his primary career in the propane heating business. He worked for Petrolane for many years and then went to Taylor Soil Service in Shelby, MT and finally purchased his own propane company,

Eastern Oregon Propane, in La Grande, OR. After retiring from the propane heating business, he started a new career in real estate and became a broker in Baker City, OR. After his wife’s retirement from the Oregon DMV, they moved to Miles City, MT in 2005.

Skip was very involved with community organizations during his lifetime. He was a member of VFW, Eagles, JC’s, and served as a Montana JC Senator for a year until his induction as an “Exhausted Rooster.”

Skip preceded in death by his parents, Gail and Myrtle Smith of Malta, MT, his brother, Gary Lee Smith of Miles City, MT, and a granddaughter, Megan Lea Sutter of Reed City, MI. He is survived by his wife, Sharon of Miles City; daughter, Lorna (John) Days of Miles City and son, Wesley (Angela) Smith of Fairbanks, AK, his brother Ronald (Elizabeth) Smith of Miles City, MT, his sister Lorna (Smith/Pray) Humbert (Jim) of Malta, Mt. He is also survived by 11 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, 4 great-great grandchildren and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

There will be a family and friends service at Stevenson and Sons Funeral Home on Sunday, January 9th, 2022 from 2-4 p.m. Family condolences and personal comments can be sent to stevensonandsons.com.

Donations can be made to his favorite charity, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.



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