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# Baker City Herald

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**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Craig Valentine of Baker City.

**BRIEFING**

**Local students on dean's list at EOU**

LA GRANDE — More than a dozen Baker County students are among the 565 named to the dean's list for the fall 2021 term at Eastern Oregon University. To qualify, students must maintain a GPA or at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale while completing at least 12 hours of graded courses.

Baker City students on the dean's list: Bryan Ames, Koe-di Birmingham, Renee Blincoe, Boston Colton, Henry Hoelscher, Hannah Johnson, Julia Krohn, Hayden Paulsen, Savannah Potter, Jayme Ramos and Mitchell Stephens.

Also earning dean's list honors are Samuel Pointer of Haines, Madison Morgan of Halfway, and Sydney Saunders of Richland.

**Public hearing set on North Baker transportation plan**

The Baker County Planning Commission will have a public hearing on Feb. 8, to discuss proposed revisions to the county's comprehensive plan related to the Northern Baker Transportation Improvement Plan.

That plan covers proposed changes to Cedar Street, Hughes Lane, 10th Street and Pocahontas Road.

The public hearing is scheduled for 5 p.m. at the County Courthouse, 1995 Third St.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
 28/13  
 Mostly sunny

**Wednesday**  
 29/12  
 Partly sunny

**Full forecast on the back of the B section.**



A train crosses Auburn Avenue in Baker City.

Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald, File

## Council votes 4-3 to pursue quiet zone

BY SAMANTHA O'CONNOR  
 soconnor@bakercityherald.com

The Baker City Council voted 4-3 on Tuesday evening, Jan. 25, to apply for a railroad quiet zone in the city, a controversial idea that opposing councilors say should be decided by voters.

The proposal, submitted by the Council's newest member, Dean Guyer, who was appointed on Dec. 14, 2021, calls for the city to seek a quiet zone through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

There are 967 quiet zones across the nation, according to the FRA. There are 13 in Oregon, including Pendleton, which has had a quiet zone since the 1970s, and La Grande, where the quiet zone took effect in December 2019.

Guyer voted for the proposal to seek a quiet zone, joined by Councilors Shane Alderson, Heather Sells and Jason Spriet.

Mayor Kerry McQuisten and Councilors Joanna Dixon and Johnny Wag-

goner Sr. voted against the proposal.

McQuisten and Dixon both talked about an initiative petition that would ask city voters to amend the city charter to prohibit the city from enacting a quiet zone unless voters approve such a plan.

Dixon, who is the chief petitioner, said that if voters chose to add that clause to the charter, it would "halt any ongoing efforts to establish a railroad quiet zone effective immediately."

Dixon said she hopes to get the charter change measure on the May 22, 2022, ballot.

**What's a quiet zone?**

In a quiet zone, freight trains are not required to sound their whistles when approaching a street crossing.

Train crews would still trigger their warning whistles at their discretion — if, for instance, they saw a vehicle or pedestrian on or near the tracks.



Guyer



Dixon

An October 2017 report from the Government Accountability Office — the official auditor of federal programs — concluded that analyses in 2011 and 2013 by the Federal Railroad Administration "showed that there was generally no statistically significant difference in the number of accidents that occurred before and after quiet zones were established." The FRA studied 359 quiet zones in 2011, and 203 more in 2013.

Guyer said he has received messages insulting him personally and asking why he was voting on the quiet zone issue given that he was ap-

pointed rather than elected.

The city charter makes no distinction between councilors who are elected and those who are appointed in terms of their voting on motions before the Council.

Guyer read aloud from a letter he received from Lynette Perry, who resigned in August 2021 due to health reasons. Guyer replaced Perry on the Council.

In her letter, Perry expressed her support for a quiet zone, citing health effects among other factors.

"One of the most important things needed to heal and return to health is getting enough sleep and good rest," Perry wrote. "This cannot be done if you live in an area, like I do, where the sound waves carry the sound of the train horns at multiple hours throughout the night."

Guyer's appointment as a councilor tilted the voting balance in favor of the quiet zone.

See, **Quiet**/Page A3

## Man accused of breaking into Baker City home, pointing gun at woman

BAKER CITY HERALD

A Baker City man was arrested Tuesday, Jan. 25, on charges that he kicked in the front door of a Baker City home, pointed a handgun at the woman who lives there and threatened to kill her if she called 911.

Tyler Joseph Anders, 32, is charged with first-degree burglary, which is a Class A felony, unlawful use of a weapon, a Class C felony, and several other felony crimes.

See, **Arrest**/Page A3

## Idaho Power files more petitions seeking access to private land

### Company wants to survey property as part of B2H power line project

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

Attorneys representing Idaho Power Company last week filed four more civil petitions in Baker County Circuit Court asking a judge to order property owners in the county to allow the company to survey their land as part of the company's Boardman to Hemingway power transmission line plan.

Idaho Power, working with PacifiCorp of Portland, hopes to start building the 293-mile, 500-kilovolt line as early as 2023. Idaho Power is represented in the civil petitions by Timothy Helfrich and Zach Olson of the Yturri Rose firm in Ontario.

In December the attorneys filed civil petitions seeking access for five Baker County properties.

See, **Power**/Page A2

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

## Project to protect watershed from fire proceeds

### Wallowa-Whitman hopes to start work in 2023

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest continues to plan a project designed to reduce the risk of a wildfire spreading through Baker City's watershed.

"This is an important project for the people of Baker City," said Kendall Cikanek, Whitman District ranger. "Protecting people's drinking water is right at the top when you're defining high-value areas."

The 10,000-acre watershed is on the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains west of Baker City. Almost the entire area is managed by the Wallowa-Whitman. The watershed is closed to public entry to protect water quality, although the city allows big game hunting, with a



Jack Myers/Contributed Photo, 2019

Lightning strikes in the Baker City watershed in August 2019.

permit, when the fire danger isn't high.

In addition, one road open to the public — Forest Road 6510, which climbs to Marble Creek Pass — bisects the watershed.

Both Forest Service and Baker City officials have for more than a quarter century sought to reduce the risk of wildfire in the heavily forested watershed.

City officials worry that a

large blaze could cause ash and mud to pollute the streams and springs that the city diverts into its water supply pipeline. The watershed supplies almost all of the city's drinking water. The city has one supplementary well — which is fortified with water from the watershed — and a second well is scheduled to come online later in 2022.

A fire, in addition to forcing the city to rely on other water sources for a period, could also lead to the city needing to build a water filtration plant, which would likely cost more than \$10 million.

(The city doesn't mechanically filter its drinking water. The water is disinfected with chlorine and with ultraviolet light to protect against bacteria and parasites such as giardia and cryptosporidium.)

"The Baker City watershed is a major asset to the

City of Baker City and our community," said Michelle Owen, the city's public works director. "We are partnering with the U.S. Forest Service to make the watershed less susceptible to a catastrophic wildfire. Removing excessive fuels and providing for fire breaks along the pipeline road are really the City's top priorities and in line with the City Council's goals. This type of a project has been discussed for many years and it's great that there is finally some real progress being made."

There hasn't been a large fire in the watershed for more than a century, but such a blaze likely is overdue, based on a study of fire scars on old trees in the watershed conducted by researchers from the University of Washington in the mid-1990s.

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