



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

The Baker Rural Fire Protection District's new 11,000-square-foot station is a major upgrade over the structure it replaces.

## Station

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The application was approved for \$650,000 — the final price of the property.

Of that total, \$350,000 is loaned from the USDA to OTEC, which in turn loans it to Baker Rural. When the fire district repays the loan, OTEC returns the money to the USDA.

The \$300,000 is from the Revolving Loan Grant. This money, as it is repaid to OTEC, will create a fund that can be loaned out again — keeping the grant dollars in the local community.

"As they repay it, we can reloan it to other community partners," Dalton said. "The ripple effect will go on for years."

She said OTEC's work with Baker Rural supports the local community, benefits the OTEC membership, and aligns with the utility's fire mitigation plan and coordination with first responders.

"It was really clear, the alignment between our strategy and their vision," Dalton said.

Coincidentally, the fire station is just south of OTEC's headquarters.

## Possibilities

The new station has about 11,000 square feet, and includes office spaces that could be leased to other emergency agencies, Lee said.

He said the building has ample space to offer a regional training facility for all disciplines of emergency services.

The first, a training on defensive tac-

tics, is planned for the end of March.

In the future, he said Baker Rural would like to build a training tower for live burns, searches and other rescue skills.

This will bring people to Eastern Oregon and provide a local place to train firefighters — rather than send them out of town, Lee said.

"The nearest is Pendleton, but most everyone goes to Salem," he said.

Baker Rural, as with all rural fire departments, depends on trained volunteers. Many departments have struggled over the past several years to maintain a roster of volunteers.

"This is going to be a huge recruitment and retention benefit for us," Lee said of the new station.

Baker Rural has 15 volunteers on the roster. When a call comes, the response depends on who is available.

More volunteers are welcome and can help in various ways — drivers, support, or fighting fires.

Training is the same for volunteer and career firefighters, Lee said.

Dalton said OTEC, as part of the partnership, will help advertise the fire district's mission and hopefully gain more volunteers.

"The partnership is exciting," Lee said.

Hoover said OTEC is hoping to form partnerships with rural fire districts across the utility's service district, which includes Baker, Union, Grant and Harney counties.

Baker Rural is planning an open house, but the date hasn't yet been set.

For information, or to inquire about volunteering, call 541-523-3897 or 541-523-3711.

## Commissioners

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Martin spoke during the public comment period of the Feb. 2 meeting, leading to a sometimes heated discussion with Commission Chairman Bill Harvey and Commissioner Mark Bennett.

In a Feb. 3 letter to commissioners calling for Nichols to apologize, Martin wrote that: "During my public testimony, Commissioners Bennett, Harvey and I engaged in dialogue. All of us with a direct, strong held positions of disagreement, but respectful of each other's right of free speech and expressing, passionately those opinions, with possibly raised voices to emphasize our points. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Nichols got up to ask for Court Security personnel to come to the Commission Chamber, evidently wanting to shut down the robust discussion we were having."

Nichols said in a phone interview on Friday, Feb. 4, that shutting down the discussion was not his intention.

Nor, Nichols said, was his request for a security officer directed at Martin.

"I'm sorry he felt that way because it was not directed at him," Nichols said. "It was directed at the flaring tempers in the room and I thought, if we could get a deputy down here to just come in, just have a presence there. That's all I wanted is to calm things down a little bit because I was afraid of things escalating and it wasn't directed at Curtis at all."

Nichols said he requested the deputy's presence because he wasn't sure whether other speakers would continue the discussion and whether the situation might become more tense.

Martin had previously written to Harvey to object to wording that the county added last month to its public announcements about commission meetings.

The notices included this paragraph:

"Baker County must comply with all federal, state and local laws, or face penalties and fines. Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR 333-019-

1025, Masking requirements for indoor spaces) states that individuals five years of age and older, regardless of vaccination status, are required to

wear a mask, face covering or face shield when in an indoor space. All individuals in attendance at meetings under the control of Baker County are expected to comply with this rule, unless actively eating, drinking, speaking or presenting in the meeting."

Harvey replied in an email to Martin, which Martin quoted during the Feb. 2 meeting:

"This is one of the continuing requirements from OHA. The county has no authority to enforce a private citizen to comply," Harvey wrote. "It is not up to the county to fine or attempt to punish anyone and I will not change this position."

Martin said during the Feb. 2 meeting that although he understands Harvey's point that the county isn't enforcing the mask requirement, he objects to what he called "acquiescence to continue compliance with these illegitimate agency mandates."

"It's time to quit hunkering down and face this tyranny head on and tell these agencies Baker County will not tolerate nor adhere to their directives," Martin said. "A majority of citizen constituents want less oppression and leadership that expresses true to local representative government. I can assure you, that is not what we are getting now."

Martin made similar points during commissioners' public hearing on Jan. 12 regarding Baker County United's request that commissioners approve a resolution stating, 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."

During the Feb. 2 discussion with Martin, Harvey said that he agrees with Martin's objection to Brown's executive orders.

"For me personally, I don't want mask requirements, I don't want mandates on shots," Harvey said. "But I do have to follow the rules as far as my employees but not the public."

Martin reiterated his complaint

about the paragraph, which mentions the mask mandate, that was added to the public meeting announcements.

"As I read that, it states to folks coming to this meeting that they're supposed to have a mask on," Martin said. "That comes from you guys, that comes from the county commissioners."

Bennett countered by noting that Oregon Revised Statute 401 allows the governor to put into place emergency declarations that have the force of state law.

"401 says Governor Brown — and I'm not saying I support it, please don't get that confused — I'm just saying she had the authority and continues to have the authority," Bennett said. "The legislature failed to overturn her authority. For whatever reason they did."

Bennett said the county's legal counsel has reviewed the orders.

"I'm not making this up and it went all the way to the US Supreme Court that said the governors have the authority to do that," Bennett said.

Martin said the commissioners need to have the "gumption and intestinal fortitude" to take the matter to court.

"I think you guys are totally lacking the pushback that we need for this county," he said.

Martin told commissioners that he was initially irritated by the commissioners' actions, then disgusted, but now he's angry.

He believes there is a majority of county residents who feel the same.

"We've had enough," Martin said.

Kody Justus of Baker County, who also spoke during the Jan. 12 public hearing, during the Feb. 2 meeting urged commissioners to vote on the resolution that Baker County United proposed.

"I think in a matter of fairness and integrity, we need to honor the effort that was put forth in preparing the resolution and the research and time that was put into researching the matter before it was put forth," Justus said. "So, I'm just encouraging you guys to actually make a motion and vote whichever way your conscience."

Harvey said the county first needs to have its legal counsel review the resolution, then put it on the agenda for a future meeting so the public knows there could be a motion for approval.

## COVID

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That was down from the weekly record of 183 cases from Jan. 16-22.

Starting with the week Dec. 12-18, weekly case totals were 22, 25, 29, 91, 176 and 183.

## Baker School District

The situation improved this week in the Baker School District, with student and staff absentee rates declining, Superintendent Mark Witty said.

The Baker Early Learning Center, which houses kindergartners, had the highest student absentee rate at 20% on Thursday, Feb. 3. That includes students who missed school for any reason — Witty said the district doesn't have details about how many absences were related to COVID-19.

Districtwide, daily absentee rates ranged between 10% and 12% this week, compared with 14% to 16% last week.

"Potentially we've ridden the crest," Witty said, referring to the county's record-breaking rate of COVID-19 cases during January due to the omicron variant. "That's what we're hoping for."

## Breakout report

The Feb. 2 OHA report listed breakouts (more than three recent cases) at four places in Baker County (not including schools).

- Powder River Correctional Facility, 11 cases (report does not distinguish between inmates and employees). Outbreak investigation started Jan. 26, also the date of the most recent onset.
- Marvin Wood Products, 11 cases. Investigated started Jan. 11, with the most recent onset Jan. 22.
- Meadowbrook Place, five cases, no deaths. First case reported Jan. 26.
- Memory Lane Homes, Baker City, three cases, no deaths. First case reported Jan. 5.

## Age breakdown of cases in December and January

Although cases jumped by five-fold in January, with 646 cases compared with 106 during December, the distribution among age groups did not change nearly as dramatically.

In both December and January, the county's youngest (younger than 10) and oldest (70 and older) residents accounted for a relatively low percentage of cases proportional to their share of the county's population.

Those two age groups combined constitute 31% of the county's population of about 16,800.

The breakdown for cases in those age groups for each

roughly 2-week period in December and January:

### Dec. 1-15

- Ages 0-9: 7.6% (of total cases)
- Ages 70+: 19.2%
- Total: 26.8%

### Dec. 16-31

- Ages 0-9: 5.5%
- Ages 70+: 9.3%
- Total: 14.8%

### Jan. 1-15

- Ages 0-9: 4.6%
- Ages 70+: 7.4%
- Total: 12%

### Jan. 16-31

- Ages 0-9: 7.6%
- Ages 70+: 10%
- Total: 17.6%

Older residents have by far the highest vaccination rates in the county (although the OHA uses age 65, rather than age 70, as the threshold).

Among Baker County residents 65 and older, 65.9% are fully vaccinated (not including booster doses).

County residents from age 20-49 had a higher share of cases, relative to their share of the population, in both December and January.

That age group accounts for about 29% of the county's population. That group's share of cases was at least 15 percentage points higher than that for each of the two-week measuring periods.

### Dec. 1-15

44.3% of total cases

### Dec. 16-31

44.5% of total cases

### Jan. 1-15

49.5% of total cases

### Jan. 16-31

48.5% of total cases

The vaccination rates for county residents ages 20 to 49 is 40.6%.

The biggest increase in the share of cases during the past two months has been in county residents ages 10 to 19.

That group, which makes up about 8% of the county's population, accounted for 1.9% of the cases during the first half of December.

That rate rose to 14.8% for the second half of December, rose again to 18.2% of total cases from Jan. 1-15, then dropped slightly to 15% of cases from Jan. 16-31.

The vaccination rate in the county for ages 10 to 19 is about 30%.

The share of cases has been relatively steady over the past two months for county residents in their 50s and 60s, the two largest groups.

Residents ages 50 to 59 make up about 13.7% of the county's population.

They accounted for 13.5% of cases during the first half of December, 18.5% in the second half of December, 10.3% in the first half of January and 10.6% in the second half of January.

The 60 to 69 age group is 18.5% of the county's population.

They had 13.5% of cases the first half of December, 7.4% the second half of the month, 10% for the first half of January, and 8.4% the second half.

The vaccination rate for ages 50 to 64 is 50.4%, the second-highest for any age group in the county.

## Breakthrough cases

Baker County had 69 breakthrough cases during the most recent week measured, Jan. 23-29. Those cases in fully vaccinated residents accounted for almost 42% of the county's total 165 cases during that week.

The rate of breakthrough cases during the previous two weeks was 34.4% and 31.8%.

Statewide, breakthrough infections made up 34.7% of the total cases from Jan. 23-29.

During January, breakthrough cases accounted for 28.8% of Oregon's 222 COVID-19-related deaths, according to OHA.

## Sandra Lee Cartwright

November 15, 1945 – December 15, 2021

Sandra Lee Bailey was born on Nov. 15, 1945, to Cloyed and Rose Bailey in Caldwell, Idaho. A short while later she moved to Baker, Oregon, with her family, where she graduated from Baker High School in 1963. She also met James Orlin Cartwright in Baker, and they were married on Dec. 4, 1964. They moved to Medford in 1965, to expand the family business, and then moved to Grants Pass in 1975. They were the proud parents of three children: Jodi, Curt and Jamie. Jim passed away in June 2003. She met Albert "Ab" Vaughn a few years later, and he became her close companion and friend. Ab passed away in May 2021. Sandy's family was most important to her. She never missed a birthday, graduation, or any important event. She especially enjoyed baking with her family during the holidays. In her free time she loved tending to her garden, including the wildlife. She loved her family's business, Cartwright's, and will be dearly missed there. Through that association she was able to donate to many community organizations. She is survived by her brother, E. Joe Bailey, and three children: daughter Jodi Harford (Bill), of Grants Pass, Oregon; son Curtis Cartwright (Asra) of San Diego, California; and son Jamie Cartwright (Elvie), Grants Pass, Oregon; seven grandchildren, Kayla, Michael, Calista, Chloe, Kai, Kaden, and Kyle; and one great-grandson, Vali. A funeral service was held on Dec. 22, 2021, at Hull & Hull Funeral Directors Interment followed at Hawthorne Memorial Gardens. Please visit the obituary, and sign the family guest book, at [www.since1928hull.com](http://www.since1928hull.com).



Sandra Lee Cartwright

## Kenneth Edward Smith

June 23 1928 - Jnsuray 6, 2022

Kenneth Edward Smith, 93, of La Grande (formerly of Baker City), passed away on Thursday, January 6, 2022 at a local care facility. At his request, there will not be a service.

Kenneth was born on June 23, 1928 in North Powder, OR to Charles and Bessie (Gilkison) Smith. He lived in Baker City and moved to La Grande in 2016 to be closer to his daughter. He attended school in North Powder and played basketball and baseball all throughout high school. He was married to Shirley Smith, Pearl Duffy, and Naomi Charbonneau.

Kenneth worked with his father as a boy at their logging business pulling logs with a team of horses. He retired from Baker School District Maintenance in 1997. He was a self-taught skilled carpenter and was very proud of the cabinets he made. He could fix just about anything.

Kenneth was a member of the Baker Elks Lodge. He was an excellent dancer and preferred the "good old western music". He enjoyed hunting, fishing, 4-wheeling, and horseback riding. His favorite place to be was in the mountains.

Kenneth is survived by his daughter, Charmaine Boesch (Emmett) of Cove, OR; grandchildren, Amy Brownwell of Newberg, OR, Brian Fosnaugh (Amber) of Tigard, OR, and Sandra Ward (Ray) of Redmond, OR; 2 great-grandchildren; and 5 nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, Charles and Bessie Smith; wife, Shirley Smith; daughter, Wanda Dima; and infant daughter, Sandra Smith.

Online condolences may be made to the family at [www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com](http://www.lovelandfuneralchapel.com).



Kenneth Edward Smith