

# Local

## TURNING BACK THE PAGES

### 50 YEARS AGO

from the Democrat-Herald

February 26, 1972

HUNTINGTON — The Locomotives thumped Imbler here 71-46 Friday night to wrap up their regular season with assurance of a playoff berth, but which playoff, when where and who are no clearer than before.

### 25 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald

February 26, 1997

Baker City voters will decide May 20 whether to allow the city to sell property in an industrial park without voter approval.

The City Council on Tuesday voted unanimously to take the proposal to voters.

The city charter, approved in 1952, requires the city to obtain voter approval before selling any piece of property worth \$5,000 or more.

### 10 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald

February 27, 2012

Baker City councilors will start conducting business a little earlier than usual Tuesday evening when they precede their regular meeting with a work session regarding the water system.

The work session will give councilors a chance to hear about what other Oregon communities that don't filter their drinking water are doing to protect against illness-causing parasites such as cryptosporidium and giardia.

The city's proposed plan is to build an ultraviolet treatment plant at an estimated cost of \$2.5 million.

### ONE YEAR AGO

from the Baker City Herald

February 27, 2021

A nonprofit promoting a proposal to add 18 Oregon counties to Idaho, including Baker County, gathered enough signatures to put a related measure on the county's May 18 special election ballot.

The measure wouldn't directly deal with Move Oregon's Border's proposal to expand Idaho.

Rather, if voters approve the measure in May, the Baker County Board of Commissioners would be required to meet on the second Wednesday every March, July and November "to discuss how to promote the interests of Baker County in any negotiations regarding relocating the state borders of Idaho to include Baker County," according to the ballot title.

Actually moving the states' border would require the approval of both the Oregon and Idaho legislatures, and of Congress.

To put the measure on the Baker County ballot, Move Oregon's Border had to collect at least 496 valid signatures from registered voters in the county, said Stefanie Kirby, Baker County clerk.

The organization submitted 746 signatures, and Kirby said she verified 630 of those.

Among the 116 signatures that weren't verified, 22 were duplicate signatures, 21 didn't match the signature on the person's voter registration, and others were from people who either aren't registered to vote or don't live in Baker County, Kirby said.

Similar measures will also be on the May ballot in Malheur, Lake, Sherman and Grant counties.

Move Oregon's Border is also seeking to put measures on the ballot this November in Harney, Morrow, Umatilla, Josephine, Jackson, Klamath and Curry counties, said Mike McCarter, who lives in LaPine, south of Bend, and is president of Move Oregon's Border.

## OREGON LOTTERY

### MEGABUCKS, FEB. 23

7-17-18-23-33-41

Next jackpot: \$2.1 million

### POWERBALL, FEB. 23

6-17-21-35-64 PB 18

Next jackpot: \$58 million

### MEGA MILLIONS, FEB. 22

6-17-22-57-62 Mega 3

Next jackpot: \$87 million

### WIN FOR LIFE, FEB. 23

20-27-52-62

PICK 4, Feb. 24

• 1 p.m.: 7-8-9-5

• 4 p.m.: 5-9-0-8

• 7 p.m.: 6-2-2-2

• 10 p.m.: 2-1-9-8

### LUCKY LINES, FEB. 24

4-8-11-16-20-23-27-30

Next jackpot: \$14,000

## SENIOR MENUS

**MONDAY (Feb. 28):** Baked ham, candied yams, mixed vegetables, rolls, green salad, brownies

**TUESDAY (March 1):** Chicken fried chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, rolls, cottage cheese and Jell-O, brownies

**WEDNESDAY (March 2):** Salisbury steak, baked beans, mixed vegetables, rolls, macaroni salad, cheesecake

**THURSDAY (March 3):** Herb-baked chicken, rice pilaf, carrots, rolls, green salad, cookies

**FRIDAY (March 4):** Barbecued ribs, baked beans, corn, rolls, coleslaw, 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.

## CONTACT THE HERALD

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# COVID hospitalizations falling fast

## State to lift mask mandate March 19

BY GARY A. WARNER

Oregon Capital Bureau

Severe cases of COVID-19 are falling so rapidly that Oregon could hit the official target that would allow the end of community indoor-mask mandates as early as March 12.

A new forecast by Oregon Health & Science University released Thursday, Feb. 24, shows the state dropping below 400 people with COVID-19 in state hospitals by March 12. That's the mark Gov. Kate Brown had set for ending indoor mask mandates.

But based on a previous OHSU forecast, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) announced Thursday morning that the mask mandate would be lifted March 19. That is the same date Department of Education Director Colt Gill said that masks would also come off at schools.

Brown also said on Thursday that she would end the pandemic state of emergency on April 1.

"We can now protect ourselves, our friends and our families without invoking the extraordinary emergency authorities that were necessary at the beginning of the pandemic," Brown said.

Gill said school districts had the option of continuing to require masks and individual students could also wear masks after the mandate is lifted.

"Every individual has the right to make that decision and

our schools will support the continued use of face coverings by individuals," Gill said in a statement.

Brown and OHA had yet to comment Thursday whether the new OHSU projection would move up the date for ending mask requirements.

Monday, Feb. 28, will mark the two-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 case in Oregon. State health officials have noted six waves of infection in Oregon over the 24 months.

Oregon has reported 691,337 cases and 6,519 deaths from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Baker County's totals, as of Thursday, Feb. 24, were 3,173 cases and 46 deaths.

Since declaring the emergency in March 2020, Brown has used the sweeping powers granted a governor to regulate business activity, close and open schools, limit the size of gatherings and require masking and other public health actions.

Dr. Peter Graven, the lead analyst on the OHSU forecast, said the state has a relatively high vaccination rate and analysis shows a large majority of state residents adhering to masking and social-distancing protocols.

Put together, the actions resulted in the omicron variant having less impact than elsewhere in the nation. The state had the fourth-lowest peak in hospitalizations when adjusted for population.

"It's clear that Oregon appears to be one of the top performers nationwide during omicron," Graven said.

Brown cautioned that de-

spite the highly positive trends, "the pandemic is not over."

"COVID-19 is still present in Oregon, and we must remain vigilant," Brown said in the statement. "We must continue to get vaccinated and boosted, wear masks when necessary, and stay home when sick. That is the only way we can achieve our shared goals of saving lives and keeping our schools, businesses, and communities open."

Hospitals in Oregon reported caring for 528 patients with COVID-19 on Thursday, Feb. 24, down from 578 the day before.

The trend in Oregon mirrors statistics from the rest of the nation. The New York Times on Thursday reported new infections are down in 49 states, with only Maine showing a rising infection rate. A drop of over 50% compared to two weeks ago was reported by 42 states.

Oregon health officials are monitoring the situation in neighboring Idaho, which has the second highest per-capita rate of new infections in the nation. Idaho's average number of new cases is 80 per 100,000 people, behind only Maine at 81 cases.

Unlike Maine, Idaho's infection rate is dropping, with the case count down 23% over the past two weeks.

Idaho reports 53% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated, far below the national average of 65%. Oregon is at 66%.

The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center reported Thursday morning that there have been over 78.7 million cases and 942,985 deaths

in the United States from COVID-19.

Worldwide, the center reported over 430.7 million cases and 5,923,711 deaths.

The steep drop in cases mirrors the steep rise in omicron, which has proven to be by far the most contagious version of COVID-19.

At its mid-January peak, new daily cases in the United States topped more than 800,000.

The variant was the first to more easily infect vaccinated people, causing a jump in "breakthrough" cases.

The outcome of infections was much better for vaccinated people. The overwhelming majority of severe cases and deaths were among unvaccinated people.

OHA said just 2.4% breakthrough cases require hospitalizations and 0.5% result in death. The median age of fatalities among vaccinated people is 80.

While significantly more contagious, omicron did not cause as many severe cases and deaths among all people who were infected.

Daily hospitalizations during the omicron wave peaked at 1,130 on Jan. 27. In comparison, the delta variant peaked at 1,178 daily hospitalizations on Sept. 1.

Deaths also were less common. Oregon's record for deaths in one month was set in September 2021, when 918 deaths were reported amid the peak of the delta variant. During the peak month of the omicron wave in January 2022, Oregon reported 301 deaths from COVID-19.

## Masks

Continued from Page A1

Mark Witty, Baker School District superintendent, said on Thursday, Feb. 24, that ending the mask mandate for schools on March 19, in conjunction with other indoor public spaces, "makes sense."

"It's something we've been advocating for," Witty said. "We appreciate the ability to make decisions with our health department at the local level that we feel are best for Baker students, staff, and families."

Although Witty said he will still be discussing the timeline with the Baker County Health Department and the Baker 5J School Board, he believes the district will be among those that make masks optional after March 19.

That's a Saturday, and spring break runs from March 21-25, with classes resuming March 28.

Witty emphasized that even after the district makes masks optional, it will "definitely support any staff member or student who chooses to wear a mask."

He said employees might also continue to wear a mask when working with students who have health issues that make them



South Baker Intermediate School/Contributed Photo

Students at South Baker Intermediate School collected toys for a Christmas toy drive in December 2021.

unusually susceptible to COVID-19.

Witty said he is urging state officials to allow school districts that make masks optional to continue to use the "test-to-stay" policy. That allows students and staff who have no symptoms, but who have possibly been exposed to someone with COVID-19, to stay in school if they have a negative test.

Witty said the district has used that policy to keep both students and employees in schools over the past few months.

When state officials announced that the mask

mandate for schools would end March 31, the proposal also included eliminating the test-to-stay option for districts that chose to make masks optional.

Witty said the Oregon Department of Education is supposed to release new guidelines soon, and he hopes the test-to-stay policy remains an option for all districts, including those that end the mask requirement after March 19.

"I would hate to lose one of the tools that we have been using effectively to keep kids in place," he said. "It's a really good tool for staff and students."

## News of Record

### DEATHS

**Betty J. Combs:** 90, a longtime Baker City resident, died Feb. 22, 2022, at Memory Lane Homes in Baker City. A visitation will be Friday, March 4, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Coles Tribute Center, 1950 Place St. Her funeral will take place Saturday, March 5, at 1 p.m. at Coles Tribute Center, with vault interment to follow at Mount Hope Cemetery. Memorial contributions can be made to the United Methodist Church or Quail Ridge Ladies Association through Coles Tribute Center, 1950 Place St., 1950 Place St., Baker City, OR 97814. To light a candle in Betty's memory, go to [www.colestributecenter.com](http://www.colestributecenter.com).

**Ivan Bork:** 78, of Baker City, died Feb. 22, 2022, at his home, surrounded by family. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences can be shared at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com).

**James Crosley 'Jim' Longwell:** 78, of Baker City died Jan. 31, 2022, at his residence. Memorial contributions can be made to the Wounded Warrior Project through Gray's West & Co. Pioneer Chapel, 1500 Dewey Ave., Baker City, OR 97814. To leave an online condolence for Jim's family, go to [www.grayswestco.com](http://www.grayswestco.com).

**Agnes Bird:** 95, a longtime Halfway resident, died Feb. 22, 2022, at her home. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences can be shared at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com).

### FUNERALS PENDING

**James Bacon:** Memorial service with military honors will take place Saturday, March 12, at 11 a.m. at the Harvest Church, 3720 Birch St. in Baker City. Memorial donations in Jim's name can be made to the Powder River Sportsmen's Club rifle range, through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834. Online condolences can be shared at [tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com).

### POLICE LOG

**Baker City Police Arrests, citations**  
FUGITIVE (one warrant from Ada County, Idaho, for probation violation, one warrant from Washington County, Idaho, for possession of controlled substance): Carol Marguerite Womack, 39, Nampa, Idaho, 12:37 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 22, in the 3600 block of Midway Drive; jailed.

**Oregon State Police Arrests, citations**  
FAILURE TO FILE ANNUAL SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION: Eric Lee Cayvelli, 31, Baker City, 9:36 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 22, on Windmill Lane; jailed.

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