

Baker Rural Fire District asks voters for 5-year tax levy

BY JAYSON JACOBY

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The Baker Rural Fire Protection District, which covers much of Baker Valley between Haines and Baker City as well as Western Heights, will ask voters in the district to approve a 5-year property tax levy.

The measure will be on the May 17 ballot.

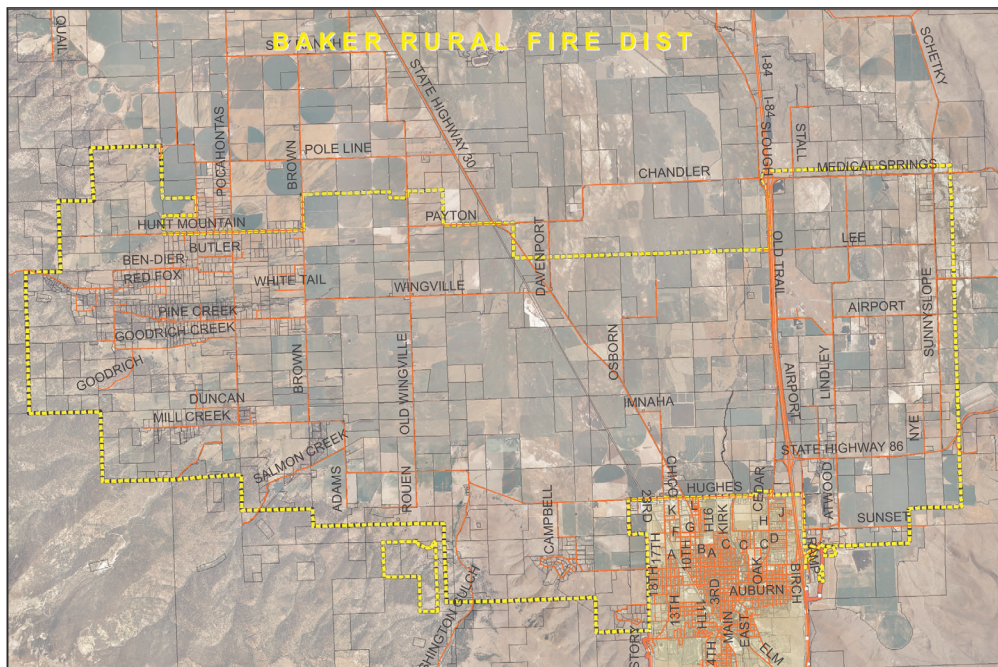
The district does not include properties inside the Baker City limits.

The levy would increase property taxes for residents within the district by \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed property value over five years. That means the owner of a home with an assessed property value of \$250,000 (which is not the same as the real market value) would pay an additional \$250 per year during the levy's 5-year duration.

If voters approve the levy, it would expire after five years unless the district decided to seek a renewal, and voters agreed to do so.

According to the measure, which the district filed with the County Clerk's office on Tuesday, March 8, the last day to get a measure on the May 17 ballot, the levy would raise an estimated \$182,000 the first of the five years.

The amounts would in-



Baker County Assessor's Office map

The yellow dashed line shows the boundaries of the Baker Rural Fire Protection District.

crease to \$187,500, \$193,000, \$199,000 and \$204,500 for the four subsequent years, the increases based on estimates of rises in property values.

Collin Kaseberg, president of the fire district's board of directors, said the district, since it was formed in 1983, has relied almost solely on a permanent property tax levy of 67 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

That levy, which has never been increased and would continue even if voters approve the new 5-year levy, yields about \$125,000 per year now, although Kaseberg said after reductions for people who pay early and other factors, the district actually receives a little more than \$100,000.

Over the decades, he said, the significant amount of

home construction and population growth in the district, which includes the Pine Creek and Goodrich Creek areas at the west end of the valley, where dozens of small parcels have been sold, has resulted in a boost in the district's workload.

Costs have also increased for equipment — turnouts for a single firefighter cost about

\$3,500, Kaseberg said, and must be replaced at least every decade.

The district's fleet also includes a total of 72 tires, with an average replacement cost of \$600 per tire, he said.

Although the surge of construction has boosted the district's tax base and thus its revenue, it hasn't kept pace with inflation and other factors, Kaseberg said.

He said he understands the potential for the timing of the levy request, a month or so after the district announced that it was buying a building as its main fire station, might make it more difficult to persuade district voters to approve the levy.

"It's a big concern to all of us" on the board, Kaseberg said.

But he said the district would have sought the 5-year levy regardless of the purchase of the station, which is on 23rd Street in the Elkhorn View Industrial Park in northwest Baker City, south of the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative headquarters.

The levy is needed to keep the district's service level consistent, Kaseberg said, which is a separate issue from the station.

The \$650,000 purchase of the new station was needed because the long-term lease for the district's station on Poca-

hontas Road — it also has stations on Lindley Lane east of the freeway and on Pine Creek Road — is expiring. Kaseberg said it is very unlikely that the owner of the Pochontas Road building would extend the lease, and building a new station would be much more expensive — possibly in the \$3 million range — than buying the 23rd Street building, which formerly housed Cutter's Edge, which made fire rescue saws.

Kaseberg said the district has received \$50,000 from the Leo Adler Foundation to help buy the station.

"That was huge — we're very appreciative," he said.

In addition, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) received a \$650,000 package — a \$350,000 loan and \$300,000 revolving grant — for the Baker Rural District's station purchase.

The district will repay all of the money to OTEC. The \$300,000 that's from the grant will be available to be loaned again to other local projects, according to OTEC.

The district will have an open house at the new fire station, 3855 23rd St., from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 9, both to show residents the new station and answer questions about the levy measure.

Council

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the ambulance issues that we face and I think that he would be an exceptional person to add to the city council."

Guyer's motion to appoint Duman failed by a 3-3 vote, with Guyer, Jason Spriet and Shane Alderson voting in favor, and Mayor Kerry McQuisten and Councilors Joanna Dixon and Johnny Waggoner Sr. opposed.

McQuisten pointed out that two other residents had applied since Sells announced her resignation — Matt Diaz and Danika Sinram.

Diaz attended Tuesday's meeting. Sinram did not.

"They certainly deserve the courtesy of reviewing their applications and discussing this. That's my opinion," McQuisten said.

Guyer contended that with Sells' position expiring at the end of the year, councilors should act quickly to replace her.

"I understand that there are some folks out there that maybe want to be considered, but this is an issue of timeliness," Guyer said.

During the meeting, Diaz addressed the council and took questions.

Spriet asked Diaz if there were any local issues that Diaz thought the city needed to address.

"The first and most obvious thing, for me because it affects me daily in winter is snow removal," Diaz said. "That's been a big issue just in my neighborhood."

Diaz told councilors he has lived near the Baker Sports Complex for four years and he hasn't seen any snowplows in his neighborhood.

Diaz also said he believes councilors should work better with the Baker County Commissioners.

Latest in a series of deadlocked votes

Duman applied last fall for

a vacancy created in August 2021 when Lynette Perry resigned due to health issues.

The six-member Council tried to replace Perry, but multiple motions failed on 3-3 votes, with McQuisten, Dixon and Waggoner Sr. in one group, and Spriet, Alderson and Sells in the other.

The Council eventually filled the vacancy on Dec. 14, 2021, by appointing Guyer on a second motion.

In other business Tuesday, councilors:

- Appointed Laurie Perry to the Planning Commission Board. Councilors voted by ballot with Guyer, Spriet, Dixon, Waggoner and Alderson voting for Perry. McQuisten voted for applicant Jonathan Fleming.

- Appointed Sarah Wynn to the Public Arts Commission.

- Appointed four members to the Budget board — Daniel McQuisten (not related to the mayor), Amanda Daugherty, Ray Duman and incumbent Shelly Cutler.

Marge Hammond Farness

May 25, 1930 - October 16, 2021

Marjorie Ann Lewis was born in Los Angeles and grew up largely in Baker City, OR. Art was always her favorite subject at school, but as the daughter of Ida Lewis, a music teacher, her early years were also spent playing piano and performing in recitals and local musical productions, the latter largely orchestrated by her mother with her brothers, Bob and Merrill, also performing. At age 17 the family moved to McMinnville, OR, where Marge enrolled in Linfield College. There she met and married Robert R. Hammond and had four children. She devoted herself to her family as Cub Scout den mom, active PTA member, swimming instructor, music and piano teacher.

Marge never lost her artistic passions, and continued to study art at Portland State University, The Portland Museum of Art School and Oregon State University. She grew to become a talented water colorist, oil painter, sculptor and printer. Her cement pools, benches, bird feeders and other largely utilitarian pieces can be found in public places and private homes and gardens throughout Oregon and beyond.

In 1972 Marge moved with her two youngest children to Corvallis where she continued her art studies. She and Bob divorced and Marge later met and married Donald Farness, a professor of economics at OSU. Together they led a life filled with friends, family, art, music and, importantly, travel. They took advantage of Don's sabbatical opportunities to spend time in Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, England. They spent another month or two traveling around Europe, and visiting their ancestors' roots in Norway and Sweden. They spent a couple months in Greece,

which they absolutely loved, and a couple more in Oaxaca, Mexico, also a favorite. They crisscrossed the United States and Canada about half a dozen times in a converted Ford Econovan, camping, birding, painting and drawing along the way.

Increasingly Marge and Don spent time at their beach house in Depoe Bay, which they eventually transformed into their primary residence upon Don's retirement. Together they built a new home and studio on the property where both were able to live out their lives. Marge lost Don

in December, 2019 and her youngest son James in January, 2021. She is survived by her three children (Robert Hammond, Amity, OR, Michael Hammond, Sparks, NV, and Nancy Hanrahan, Wilton, CT), their families including 6 grandchildren and their families, and many nieces and nephews and their families. She is missed by family and countless friends, all of whom feel honored and enriched to have been a part of her world.

Marge and Don spent many happy hours attending concert and opera events at the Newport Performing Art Center in Newport, Oregon. Accordingly, the family is inviting those who wish to honor their memory to consider making a tax deductible donation to a fund established in their memory at the Oregon Coast Council for the Arts (OCCA). The Marge and Don Farness Classical Piano Performances Fund will go to support future piano performances at the Newport Performing Arts Center. Donations may be made online at <https://coastarts.org/product/marge-don-farness-fund/> or by phoning 541-574-2652.



Chess

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Grades K-5, Brooklyn

Sylvia Rich, Sarah Perini, Obsidian Adams, Jameson Barnett, Charlotte Burrill, Oak Richards

On to state

For the state chess tournament, FridayPlus will provide transportation, lodging and tournament registration fees.

Individuals qualified in grades 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, plus the Baker Middle School team.

"This is the first time that Baker schools will be represented at the state chess tournament and it's all due to their dedication to the game," Wolfe said. "They continue to show

growth and progress each time we meet and we'll be really working hard in the next coming weeks to prepare for state."

The BMS team heading to state includes Jacob Burton, Weston Burton, Dallin Stocks, Elias Taylor and Jace Whitford. Alternates are Christopher Dallstream and Justin Wolfe.

Individual players who qualified for state are: Sylvia Rich (K-4), Evan Carroll (grade 5), Joseph Chastain (grade 6), Dallin Stocks (grade 7), Elias Taylor (grade 7) and Christopher Dallstream (grade 8).

"Win, lose or draw these kids keep playing with composure and sportsmanship," Wolfe said. "We've got some really great players and I'm lucky to get to coach such a great group of kids."

About CFS

Chess for Success was founded in 1996, growing out of the Portland Chess Project, which was a pilot program established in the worst-performing schools in Portland.

For the 2021-2022 season, 73 schools are participating in Chess for Success in Oregon and southwest Washington.

The Oregon State Chess Tournament celebrated its 50th year in 2016. The tournament was cancelled in 2020, and held virtually in 2021.

Sharon Everson

September 11, 1957 – February 13, 2022

Sharon (Nelson) Everson, 64, of Baker City, Oregon passed away surrounded by her loved ones at St. Alphonsus in Nampa Idaho on February 13, 2022. A memorial service will be held at Elkhorn Baptist Church at 2:00 on March 19, 2022. Pastor Tim Fisher will officiate.

Sharon was born on September 11, 1957 in Harlingen, Texas to her mother Anzelee (Talley) Nelson and her father Kermit Gibby Nelson. Her father was in the U.S. Air Force, so Sharon spent much of her childhood following him around the world.

Sharon met the love of her life Terry Everson in Honolulu, Hawaii and they were married on January 19, 1980 at Calvary Baptist Church in Cleveland Tennessee. The couple had been married 42 years when she passed. Sharon was stay at home mom for many years before working at the Baker Middle School, and finally retiring as an executive assistant at New Direction Northwest in 2013.

Sharon had been an active member of Elkhorn Baptist Church for over 30 years, she served in the children and youth ministries as long as her health allowed.

She loved to make handmade gifts for her family and friends, she spent much of her free time crocheting. She could be found in the kitchen every Sunday after church cooking dinner for her family.

She loved to spend time with her family especially her grandchildren, she would sit and listen to their stories for hours and even tell a few of her own. She loved to laugh and always looked for the humor in any situation.

Sharon was survived by her brothers Gibby, Steve and Charles Nelson and her husband, Terry Everson along with children Marie (Terry) Taylor, Somer (Joel Milburn) Everson, Donald (Katherine) Everson, Julia (Kristian) Krohn and grandkids Dalton, Preston, Naomi, Noah John, Adrianna, Jocelyn, Donald Cecil, and Gideon James and great grandson Sutton Taylor.

Sharon was preceded in death by her parents and grandparents.



Margurette Hall

March 31, 1926 – March 2, 2022

Margurette D. Hall, age 95, entered into Heaven on March 2, 2022. A funeral service was held at noon on Wednesday, March 9, at Gray's West & Company Pioneer Chapel with Pastor Jesse Whitford of the Baker City Christian Church officiating. She was laid to rest with a vault interment at Mount Hope Cemetery next to her late husband, Ray Richard Hall.

Margurette was born in Boise, Idaho, to Carney Johnson and Cora Johnson (Goodman). She graduated from Halfway High School. Margurette was married to Ray Richard Hall on December 22, 1945. They were married for 36 years. Together they raised two sons, Jerry and Tracy, and two daughters, Lorna and Sandra. Margurette worked at J.R. Simplot Company and also as a waitress. She was active at the First Christian Church, Old Oregon Trail Ride, V.F.W. Auxiliary, Eagles, and Sheriff's Possettes. Margurette enjoyed hunting, camping, and little league.

Margurette is survived by her daughter, Lorna Beam (John) of Baker City, Oregon, her son, Jerry Hall of Wasilla, Alaska; her daughter, Sandra Rounsville of Baker City, Oregon; and her son, Tracy Hall of Baker City, Oregon. Margurette is also survived by 10 grandchildren, Jerry Dowdy (Trina), Justin Hall (Kristie), Lance Hall, Ray Dowdy, Doug Dowdy, Stacey Zoon (Dale), Mandy Garrett (Josh), Danielle (Kurt) Colnot, Cassie Hall, Lee Reedy; 21 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her father Carney Johnson; mother Cora Goodman; and husband, Ray Hall.

Memorial contributions may be made to Best Friends of Baker City or to the charity of one's choice through Gray's West & Co. Pioneer Chapel, 1500 Dewey Ave., Baker City, OR 97814.

To light a candle in Marge's memory or to offer online condolences to her family, please visit www.grayswestco.com.



Ernest Ray Darlington

July 29, 1932 – March 6, 2022

Ernie Darlington passed away of natural causes at his home in Baker City on March 6, 2022. Ernie was 89. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Alberta Darlington; his daughter and son-in-law Glinda and Jim Fennell of Burley, Idaho, their son and Ernie's eldest grandson Derek Fennell of Twin Falls, Idaho, Derek's children and Ernie's great-grandchildren Bronson and Mattie Fennell. Ernie is also survived by his son Doug Darlington and grandson Sage Darlington, both of Baker City.

Ernie was preceded in death by his mother and stepfather, Ethel and Pete Manchon, his brother, Bill Darlington and sister, Vera Walters.

Ernie was born in Baker City on July 29, 1932. After his school years, he met and married Alberta Hendrick in 1952 and joined the United States Army the same year. After three years stationed at Fort Lewis in Washington state, he returned to Baker and went to work at Baker Bottling Co.

Shortly thereafter, he went to work for Dick Kirby at Coast to Coast Hardware. Ernie was a hardware man the rest of his life, working not only in Baker but in Burley Idaho, Florence Oregon, Springfield, Oregon, Bend, Oregon, and finally back in Baker. He finished his career at Ace Hardware, working even in retirement.

Ernie found joy helping others in unsung ways: from repairing kids toys for Christmas bazaars to using his hardware and plumbing knowledge to help friends and strangers alike. Over the years, Ernie enjoyed hunting, camping, fishing, lawncare and tinkering in his woodshop.

A memorial will be planned for summer. He will be missed. Online condolences may be shared at www.tamispevalleyfuneralhome.com.

