

Local

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

50 YEARS AGO

from the Democrat-Herald
April 7, 1972

The Yellow Daisy is a new clothing store at 1833 Main devoted exclusively to children’s “fun” apparel. Carole Smith, owner, said her shop should fill the casual and sports clothing needs of infants up to teens and juniors, as well as maternity wear.

25 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald
April 7, 1997

Baker’s girls and boys track teams finished first at the Baker Invitational Friday at Baker High School. The girls topped Burns, Ontario and Vale with 94 points, and the boys scored 105 points on a windy afternoon better suited to ice hockey than to track and field.

10 YEARS AGO

from the Baker City Herald
April 6, 2012

Baker County commissioners on Wednesday made an emergency declaration for the small city of Greenhorn. The action was prompted by no candidates filing for Greenhorn’s vacant positions to be included on the May 15 primary election ballot. “Landowners within the city have been unable to build, conduct land-use actions or conduct business with the city as a result of the current lack of governance for the city,” said Mark Bennett, the county’s emergency management director.

ONE YEAR AGO

from the Baker City Herald
April 8, 2021

Last year Baker County declared a drought disaster when summer was on the wane. In 2021 the drought situation is dire while spring has barely begun. On Wednesday morning, April 7, the Baker County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution declaring a drought disaster in the county and asking both Gov. Kate Brown and U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to follow suit. State and federal drought declarations could make county property owners eligible for financial aid and other assistance, and give state water regulators more flexibility in allocating water. Baker County could become the second of Oregon’s 36 counties to have a state drought declaration. Brown on March 31 declared a drought in Klamath County, the first such declaration of 2021. Jason Yencopal, the county’s emergency management director, told commissioners during their regular meeting Wednesday that the drought has been worsening. “Baker County’s had extreme drought in the county since February second,” Yencopal said. “So we’re a little over eight weeks now.” Until Feb. 2, the U.S. Drought Monitor Index rated the central part of the county, including Baker Valley, as being in severe drought on a five-level scale that starts at abnormally dry and moves into moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional drought. But on Feb. 2 the index, which is updated weekly, added a circular area, including Baker Valley, that’s rated as extreme drought.

OREGON LOTTERY

MEGABUCKS, APRIL 4
5 - 7 - 11 - 28 - 41 - 48
Next jackpot: \$3.8 million

POWERBALL, APRIL 4
2 - 32 - 39 - 46 - 69 PB 6
Next jackpot: \$246 million

MEGA MILLIONS, APRIL 5
22 - 43 - 60 - 63 - 64 Mega 18
Next jackpot: \$94 million

WIN FOR LIFE, APRIL 4
12 - 38 - 66 - 71

PICK 4, APRIL 5

- 1 p.m.: 2 - 6 - 4 - 6
- 4 p.m.: 2 - 1 - 5 - 1
- 7 p.m.: 1 - 2 - 3 - 8
- 10 p.m.: 7 - 5 - 8 - 8

LUCKY LINES, APRIL 5
1-5-10-16-20-21-26-29
Next jackpot: \$17,000

SENIOR MENUS

FRIDAY (April 8): Roast turkey, stuffing, corn, rolls, Jell-O with fruit, cheesecake
MONDAY (April 11): Baked ziti, garlic bread, zucchini and tomatoes, ambrosia, brownies
TUESDAY (April 12): Hot turkey sandwich, mashed potatoes, peas, green salad, cookies
WEDNESDAY (April 13): Chicken broccoli fettuccine, green beans and tomatoes, garlic bread, fruit and cottage cheese, ice cream
THURSDAY (April 14): Beef stew, broccoli, rolls, green salad
FRIDAY (April 15): Baked cod, clam chowder, capri vegetables, rolls, coleslaw, bread pudding

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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Ambulance

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Commissioner Mark Bennett said the \$150,000 figure is based on an estimate from the city that about 20% of the ambulance calls the city fire department handles are outside the city limits but within the approximately 2,000 square miles that comprise the Baker ambulance service area.

Kim Mosier, the county’s attorney, told commissioners that the city estimates its shortfall for operating ambulances at \$750,000. Bennett said the \$150,000 offer from the county is 20% of the \$750,000. Mosier told commissioners that based on recent conversations with city officials, even a county contribution of \$750,000 might not be enough to allow the city to continue operating ambulances.

Bennett, along with Commission Chairman Bill Harvey and Commissioner Bruce Nichols, pointed out that the county can’t afford to give the city \$750,000. “There’s zero way we can get to that target,” Bennett said.

He said he made the motion to offer \$150,000 to the city because he wants to keep the discussion going.



Harvey



Nichols



Bennett

Bennett said he was shocked when the Baker City Council during its March 22 meeting, after hearing a presentation from City Manager Jonathan Cannon, voted to send a notice to the county that the city intended to cease ambulance service Sept. 30.

Bennett noted that a one-year contract that the city proposed this winter called for a county contribution of about \$130,000 for the next fiscal year, and that the county had offered \$137,000. That the figure has apparently increased to \$750,000 “kind of boggles my mind,” Bennett said.

Nichols said that although he understands the city’s financial predicament — “they are literally going broke with the ambulance service” — he is upset with the city’s approach, in sending the notice with the Sept. 30 date.

“We could have worked together,” Nichols said. “We need to do this in partnership, not working against each other. That benefits no one.”

Nichols described the City Council’s March 22 notice as “pulling the rug out from un-

derneath” the county.

During a public hearing on the issue during Wednesday’s meeting, two Baker City Fire Department firefighter/paramedics spoke to commissioners.

B.J. Lynch, a 20-year veteran, said that although he appreciates the county’s offer of \$150,000, it’s not enough “to solve the problem.”

Casey Johnson, president of the local union chapter that represents firefighters, said he addressed commissioners “because Baker City’s public safety is at risk.”

Johnson said that if the city does stop operating ambulances, the loss of revenue from billing — even though that doesn’t cover the city’s costs for operating ambulances — would force the city to cut its firefighting staff by half.

That would significantly reduce the department’s ability to fight fires, Johnson said. With just two people on duty, firefighters wouldn’t be able to enter structures to try to rescue people or pets in many instances, he said.

Wes Morgan, chief of the Powder River Rural Fire District in the Sumpter Valley, and Kathi Vinson, a long-time volunteer emergency responder in Sumpter, both told commissioners that the Baker City Fire Department provides a valuable service.

Harvey also read a letter from Pat Sullivan, chief of the volunteer department in the Unity and Burnt River area.

Sullivan also expressed appreciation for the Baker City Fire Department, and suggested the city and county seek a one-year contract to continue having the city be responsible for the Baker ambulance service area.

Dean Guyer, a Baker City Council member who said he was speaking as a private citizen and not a councilor, noted that one reason for the city’s financial troubles is that the city accepted a federal grant in 2018 to hire three new firefighter/paramedics. But the federal money went away in 2021, and now the city is solely responsible for the personnel costs for those three people. The fire department’s personnel costs have risen from about \$1.6 million to \$2 million over the past four years.

Harvey said he understands that situation. He described it as a “mistake” to accept the grant.

“But we’re past that point,” he said. Harvey said the county needs figures from the city regarding the cost of operating ambulances outside the city.

Without those numbers, Harvey said, the county can’t ask voters to approve a property tax levy to pay for ambulance service.

Such a levy is one potential option for raising money for ambulance operations.

“Until we have facts we don’t have solutions,” Harvey said.

Competition

Continued from Page A1

Hill, though, contends that having the county rent sprayers and sell herbicide, at whatever frequency or amount, constitutes a “slippery slope” of government competing against private businesses.

He concedes that county officials have good intentions in wanting to expand weed control, but he’s still worried about “driving private business out a little at a time.”

Hill said he appreciates Pettingill’s efforts to promote work to stem to spread of weeds, which can reduce the productivity and value of farmland and rangeland, and respects his “passion” for the task.

Hill said he also supports the county’s cost-share program, which helps defray landowners’ expenses to control weeds. “I’m not trying to dampen that fire at all,” Hill said. “What I’m saying is we’re going about it the wrong way.”

Hill brought his complaints to Baker County commissioners during their meeting on Wednesday, April 6.

Commissioners’ agenda included buying a credit card reader to handle transactions for sprayer rentals and herbicide sales.

Hill told commissioners he “vehemently” opposes the county buying a card reader for the weed district because it promotes what he considers unfair competition with his business and others.

“The bigger issue of the card reader is why does the county even need to sell products?” Hill said. “You have eleven different pesticide suppliers in this county.”

Commission Chairman Bill Harvey said he doesn’t want the county to compete with private firms, either.

But both he and Pettingill, in response to Hill’s concerns, said there aren’t enough local contractors to do all the types of work that landowners need.

Harvey said he prefers private weed control work as possible. But if a contractor isn’t available, he said, it’s important to deal with weeds.

Hill countered by saying that the county’s weed control board isn’t complying with its bylaws, which require it to keep an updated list of weed control contractors.

Hill said he’s been in the

business for seven years, but he’s not on the county’s list of contractors.

“They aren’t even following their own commitment to you and to the county to do their job to maintain that list of contractors,” Hill said.

“If the work is there, let’s let private business take care of it,” he said. “The government has an unfair competitive advantage over a private business like myself.”

Commissioner Mark Bennett said he doesn’t think the county is trying to compete with Hill’s or anyone else’s business.

The goal, Bennett said, is to deal with noxious weeds as

effectively, and as widely, as possible.

“I think there’s a balance there” between the county promoting weed control and supporting local businesses.

He said a simple solution would be to have a list of weed contractors available to citizens.

“But there gets to the point of, some of the people won’t do it, so we’ve got to help them and if they can’t find anybody because all of you are so busy in the hot spring time, and then next thing you know hot weather shows up and you can’t do it, but these little spot spraying things and I think there’s that balance,” Bennett said.

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Sat & Sun 1:00, 4:00, 7:00
Mon-Thurs 7:00

THE LOST CITY (PG-13)
Friday 4:10, 7:10
Sat & Sun 1:10, 4:10, 7:10
Mon-Thurs 7:10

MORBIUS (PG-13)
Friday 4:20, 7:20
Sat & Sun 1:20, 4:20, 7:20
Mon-Thurs 7:20

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POLICE LOG

Baker City Police
Arrests, citations
MULTIPLE WARRANTS: Paul Adam Heller, 50, transient, 12:40 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, at Resort Street and Washington Avenue, cited and released.
PROBATION VIOLATION: Tamara Kay Fine, 48, Baker City, 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 5, at Wade Williams Park; jailed.
Baker County Sheriff’s Office
Arrests, citations
FOURTH-DEGREE ASSAULT (domestic), HARASSMENT: Daniel Allen Clary, 42, Haines, 8:04 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, on Welch Road; jailed.