

Housing

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The money for the home purchases does not come from the \$4 million property tax levy that district voters approved in May 2021. The district is combining that money with a \$4 million state grant, and \$4 million from the district's capital projects fund, for a variety of projects, including new heating, cooling and ventilation systems at all district schools, and building a 5,000-square-foot cafeteria/kitchen/multipurpose building at Baker Middle School.

Board member Jessica Dougherty said she believes the International School program, which is slated to bring 22 to 30 foreign students to Baker City this fall, "can be such an amazing thing for our community."

Dougherty said the International School will expose Baker students to a variety of cultures, as well as make it more affordable, through scholarships, for local students to travel to other countries either for shorter visits or to study abroad for a semester or an entire school year.

"They get an experience that is so important to their life," Dougherty said.

Dougherty is also one of the five board members for the International School. They were appointed by the Baker School Board.

The other members of the board for the International School are Mark Witty, the Baker schools superintendent who is retiring June 30 but will work one-third time as the International School's director, Andrew Bryan, who like Dougherty is a Baker school board member, Katie Lamb and Claire Hobson.

During the public participation portion of Tuesday's meeting, the Baker School



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

The Baker School District bought this historic home, at 1706 Washington Ave., for \$295,000 in March 2022 as housing for visiting students attending Baker High School through the district's International School program.

Board heard from Heather Dallstream of Baker City.

Dallstream, who is the parent of a student in the district, read from written remarks she submitted to the board.

She criticized the board for failing to adequately explain the International School plans to district residents, noting that she learned only on April 1 of this year that the district had bought the first house.

Dallstream urged the board to reject the plan to buy the second home "until the taxpayers and community receive full information and give the board our consent."

In a phone interview after the board meeting, Dallstream said she "sees value" in the International School program.

But she objects to spending money from the district budget on something that she believes will benefit comparatively few students compared with other possible uses of the dollars.

"Currently there are so many deficiencies in the district that these funds could immediately address," Dallstream told the board during the meeting. "Out of date learning materials, school supply shortages, food quality,

staffing shortages, building and equipment maintenance to name a few."

She called for a "full and complete audit of the 5J School District and every single dollar spent. There are too many closed door deals happening benefiting administrators and not our students."

During the meeting, board member Julie Huntington said the board and district officials are always looking for ways "to enhance what we offer, to give our students more."

The International School, with its opportunities for local students both to meet teenagers from other countries and cultures, and to study abroad themselves, "is one of the ways, and we're excited about the opportunity," Huntington said.

Board member Andrew Bryan touted the International School as the latest example of the district's innovative and enterprising approach, also citing the Baker Technical Institute and the district's other charter schools.

Baker Charter Schools includes both the Baker Web Academy, a statewide online high school, and Baker Early College, a public high school



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

The Baker School Board voted on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, to buy this historic home at 1503 Second St. for \$490,000. District officials estimate it will cost another \$35,000 for renovations to use the home to house foreign students studying at Baker High School.

that offers dual high school and college credits.

Bryan said the district has added those programs and kept the district in a sound financial position even as many districts statewide have had to cut teachers and other staff.

He said he's confident that the financial projections for the International School are conservative and that the program will add to, rather than reduce, the academic offerings to local students.

The district estimates the total upfront cost to provide housing for visiting students

at \$865,000. That includes the purchase prices and \$40,000 in remodeling for the Washington Avenue home, and \$35,000 to remodel the Second Street home.

Each home will accommodate at least six international students. A family will live in each home as well.

In response to a question from board member Travis Cook, Witty said the district expects to host 22 to 30 foreign students for the 2022-23 school year.

With both district-owned houses available, Witty said

the district will likely need an additional 12 to 14 families to host students in their homes.

He said the district is recruiting host families.

Thomas Joseph, who is principal for the International School, told board members that the district will have to turn down some applying students because there is more interest than the district has space for in the first year.

Witty said the district will have students from multiple countries, including Spain, Italy, France and, potentially, Ukraine.

The district created the International School program more than four years ago, but the pandemic curtailed progress for the past two years, Witty said.

The board, as part of the projected budget, reviewed staff costs for the International School, including:

- Joseph, as principal and the only full-time employee, total personnel costs, including salary and benefits, of \$164,227 for the first year.

- Witty, one-third time, personnel costs of \$53,300.

- Communications, one-tenth time, \$10,275.

- Business management, 0.05, \$5,000.

- Technical, 0.05 time, \$3,782.

Mardelle LaDorise Webb Allen Ebell

November 30, 1921 - April 3, 2022

Mardelle LaDorise Webb Allen Ebell, 100, departed for glory April 3, 2022, after an eight-month battle with breast

cancer. A service celebrating Mardelle's life will be held at Pine Valley Presbyterian Church Saturday, April 16, 2022, at 2 in the afternoon. Interment will follow at Pine Haven Cemetery followed by a reception and time to share memories at the Pine Valley Presbyterian Fellowship Hall.

Although her life ended only one hundred miles from her birthplace, global travel, multiple occupations, and many social worlds came in between. She lived life to the fullest, loving the company of family and friends, and pursuing her interests with zest and an indomitable will.

Mardelle was born in New Plymouth, Idaho, to Elton and Gussie Mae Kelley Webb November 30, 1921. The family moved to Pine Valley the following year, living in several places before taking ownership of the gas station on the site of the present Tri-Color Building in Halfway in 1928. When Elton and Gussie divorced in 1929, Gussie ran Webb's Service Station alone; quite a feat for a single mother in the 1920s.

Mardelle's education began at the Jintown School, continuing at Halfway Elementary and later at the Sunny Dell School. In 1932, Gussie married Edward Mehlhorn, a homesteader and president of the Mehlhorn Lumber Company. She was deeply fond of her stepfather and had happy memories of growing up on what is now the Mehlhorn Century Farm on Sunny Dell Lane, working hard milking cows, tending chickens, and feeding hogs. She was valedictorian of her 1939 high school class, of which she was the last living member.

Music was central to Mardelle's life from an early age. She began studying piano with Edith Grimm, adding violin, and later traveling to Baker for voice lessons. During high school, she often earned \$15 playing violin for dances in Cornucopia. Aided by a scholarship and the farm cream check, she attended Willamette University for two years as a music major; it was there that she met Hiram ("Hewie") Allen, whom she married in 1942.

Hewie became a bandmaster in the US Air Force, and Mardelle's life as an Air Force wife and mother began. After her marriage, she completed her Music Education degree at the University of Oregon, graduating in 1944 shortly before the birth of their first daughter, Sheila, in Chico, California. Son Gregory was born while Hewie was stationed in Cheyenne, Wyoming. During that time, Mardelle took Sheila to Denver to attend a concert by the legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony.

Although frequent relocations created hardships, the experience of two years in Japan was one of the highlights of Mardelle's life. She taught kindergarten at the American School in Tokyo and climbed Mount Fujiyama with 8-year-old Sheila. The next Air Force assignment was in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, where daughter Cynthia was born. Hewie's most prestigious post was as conductor of the NORAD Band in Colorado Springs, where Mardelle taught piano in the home and participated in church and community choruses. She made sure that her children heard a piano recital by Van Cliburn shortly after he won the First Tchaikovsky Piano Competition at the height of the Cold War. When Hewie had posts overseas where family housing was not available, Mardelle and the children would return to Oregon - Halfway was always the home base.

By 1963, their marriage was headed toward divorce. Mardelle made a brave move to San Diego to make a new life for herself and her children.

She initially sold cemetery property, then taught music at a private school before becoming a social worker. She was active in the La Jolla Presbyterian Church and the San Diego music community. She continued to pursue adventure, vacationing in Mexico and Hawaii and loved attending the Torrey Pines Golf Tournaments in La Jolla. She shared Sheila's moment on the stage of the Met Opera in

New York as a finalist in the Met's national competition, and frequently bragged about meeting with King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola of Belgium in 1978, when she attended the Queen Elisabeth International Piano Competition in Brussels, where Greg was awarded second prize.

The homecoming chapter of Mardelle's life began in 1985 when she returned to Pine Valley to care for her mother, who passed away in 1993 at the age of 102. Mardelle was an Elder of Pine Valley Presbyterian Church, took part in the calling of two ministers, and even preached as a lay minister. On April Fool's Day 1992 she married longtime family friend Chuck Ebell with Rev. Bill Shields walking her down the aisle and officiating at the ceremony. Chuck and Mardelle shared seven happy years, making their home in Baker City and traveling to Hawaii and across the country for family visits.

As a widow, she continued to manage the Mehlhorn farm as well as Chuck's ranch and cattle. She remained active in AAUW and Baker Community Concerts, the Literary Lunch Bunch, and card clubs (she could be a formidable pinochle player!). She supported classical music endeavors in the area and revisited Japan on a Sister Cities trip. As her vision declined, she made the hard but voluntary decision to quit driving. During her last year, she enjoyed visits from all her great-grandchildren and the presence and support of her children. Her love of music never diminished; at 99 she went to the piano, slowly picked out and then managed to play a portion of her favorite piano piece, *Rustle of Spring*, for her great-granddaughters. In her final months she sang favorite hymns and Irish songs around the house and during rides around Baker Valley. She passed in her living room facing her beloved Eagle Cap mountains with her daughters near.

Mardelle is survived by her three children: Sheila Allen Yeomans and husband David, Gregory Allen and husband Robert Warren; and Cynthia Thayer; granddaughter Sheryl Yeomans Jordan and husband Peter; grandson Matthew Thayer and wife Jane; and great-grandchildren Edith and Anne Jordan and Doris and Sawyer Thayer; step-son Myron Ebell, wife Tory and children Julia, Charles, Gemma, and Thomas. She was preceded in death by Charles Ebell, Hiram Allen, and her sister Helen Moseley. Mardelle often expressed gratitude to the caretakers that allowed her to remain in her home. She and her family are deeply thankful for the faithful and loving care provided by Theresa Johnson, Carrie Cummings, and Brenda Fisher, especially during her final months.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Pine Valley Presbyterian Church, the Hilary Bonn Benevolent Fund, Pine Valley Rural Fire Protection District, or Crossroads Center for the Arts through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, Oregon 97834. Online condolences may be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com.

Zone

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Engineers still have the discretion to use their whistles in an emergency.

The Council voted 4-3 on Jan. 25 of this year to apply for a quiet zone.

But the roster of councilors has changed since then.

Heather Sells, one of four councilors who voted in favor of applying for a quiet zone on Jan. 25, resigned March 1 because she was moving outside the city.

Councilors appointed Kenyon Damschen to replace Sells. Damschen, who was sworn in at the start of Tuesday's meeting, voted in favor of Dixon's motion to put the issue on the Nov. 8 ballot.

The other yes votes were from Dixon, Mayor Kerry McQuisten and Councilor Johnny Waggoner Sr., all of whom voted against the Jan. 25 motion to apply for a quiet zone.

Councilors Jason Spriet and Shane Alderson, who both supported the quiet zone application motion in January, voted against Dixon's motion Tuesday.

Councilor Dean Guyer, who also supported the quiet zone application in January, was absent Tuesday.

Guyer's vote was the deciding factor in the Jan. 25 motion.

Last fall, when the Council was down to six members, separate motions — one to apply

for a quiet zone, one to take the matter to voters — each failed by 3-3 votes. Dixon, Waggoner and McQuisten favored the voter proposal, and Alderson, Spriet and Sells supported having the city applying for the quiet zone.

That deadlock was broken after the Council appointed Guyer on Dec. 14, 2021. About six weeks later Guyer joined Alderson, Spriet and Sells in voting for the motion to apply for a quiet zone.

Spriet asked Dixon during Tuesday's meeting "why are we backing away?" from what the Council decided less than three months ago.

"In my opinion this is a decision the council made already," Spriet said.

Dixon said she continues to believe, as she did when she voted against the Jan. 25 motion to apply for a quiet zone, that voters should make the final decision on the issue.

In a post on her Facebook page Wednesday morning, April 13, McQuisten, referring to the decision to put the quiet zone issue on the Nov. 8 ballot, wrote: "Why did we do this? We aren't tone-deaf to our community and bending to a vocal special interest group. That's why. People deserve a voice on this issue, whichever way they decide."

Peter Fargo, a member of the group that has promoted the quiet zone and encouraged the City Council to apply for the designation, wrote to the Baker

City Herald in response to the Council's vote Tuesday:

"This is about safer schools for our kids, safer railroad crossings, and everyone's right to sleep in their own home. We are grateful that two past Baker City councils voted to pursue the quiet zone in 2019 and January 2022. This project will relieve our commu-

nity of a harmful federal regulation that imposes train horn noise day and night. The horn has been measured at 110 decibels on the playground of South Baker School, which is a level proven harmful to kids and adults."

Fargo pointed out that the motion the Council approved Jan. 25 stated that the city would not spend any money on the physical upgrades to five public crossings required to qualify for a quiet zone. Those upgrades, which could include concrete dividers or similar impediments, are designed to make it more difficult for a vehicle to get to the tracks when a train is passing.

The group that Fargo belongs to is raising money to redo the crossings, and he said the group, in the past three months, has raised nearly half the estimated \$150,000 needed. That includes \$25,000 from the Baker School District.

"This is not about politics," Fargo wrote to the Herald. "It's just about doing the right thing for our kids and community. That's why we are going to keep at it."

2022

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