

Baker County Commission, Position 3 (chairman)

Shane Alderson

Question 1: Biographical information: Name, age, occupation, educational background, etc.

Shane Alderson, 42 years old
My family has called Baker County home since 1935. My wife Alisha and I love raising our young daughter in this beautiful community, surrounded by small town values.

My brother Mark and I run our sporting goods store, Baboon Creek Outfitters, on Main Street.

Question 2: Current or past political or public service experience:

Former American Red Cross, Health & Safety Instructor and Disaster Relief Volunteer. Former Baker County Search and Rescue Volunteer.

Currently serving as City Councilor on Baker City Council.

Wilderness First Responder Certification, Wilderness Medical Associates, Wilderness & Remote First Aid & CPR Certification, American Red Cross; FEMA Incident Command System Certification, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Emergency Medical Technician Certification, Blue Mountain Community College.

Question 3: What are your thoughts about the current discussion between commissioners and Baker City regarding ambulance service, in particular the possibility of asking voters to approve a property tax levy to raise revenue for the service?

As a City Councilor, I was shocked to be informed by our City Manager that our ambulance services would no longer be sustainable without city and county taxpayers heavily subsidizing EMS services. I strongly stand by our local firefighters, paramedics, and EMTs. My hope as City Councilor and as County Commissioner would be to retain local services with local staff. These dedicated residents have the best understanding of the unique needs of our county and they are an invaluable part of our community. I believe that at this time an EMS district is our only option to retain local ambulance services.

Question 4: List and discuss your top 3 goals were you to be elected:

- Housing shortage: Like all of Oregon, Baker County is experiencing a housing crisis. The housing available to the community is not sufficient to meet workforce needs. The cost of housing is so high that residents have been forced to leave the county. This has left our workforce severely depleted. The lack of workforce makes it nearly impossible to bring new industry to the county. Many home

owners have changed rentals into Air Bnb destinations, leaving very few options to local residents who rent. This has had a negative impact on our low- and medium-income families and has exasperated the hardship of many of our most vulnerable citizens. As County Commissioner, I will advocate to bring affordable workforce housing to Baker County. I will team up with county and city planning departments, housing task force, and economic development to find solutions to this problem. I will promote economic development, small business, and size-appropriate industry.

- Natural resources: I will fight for forest access. Keeping our forests open is vital to fire management and fuel reduction. Without an open forest our outdoor recreation industry would be greatly compromised. In the past, our natural resources created most of our economy. I would like to bring sustainable land use back to Baker County. Growing up in Baker County with the high deserts and forests started this love. I will fight for our mining, grazing, timber, forest access, and recreation.

- Homelessness and addiction: Homelessness and addiction are a growing crisis throughout Oregon. Poor policies passed by our state lawmakers have made it more difficult to address these issues. I will work with our mental health professionals, churches, and faith-based organizations to find solutions to break the cycle of addiction that leads to homelessness. Focusing interventions on this dilemma is an immediate priority for the safety and health of our community.



Alderson

Joe Johnson

Question 1: Biographical information: Name, age, occupation, educational background, etc.

Joe Johnson, 33, Baker County Sheriff's Office Telecommunicator. I am currently enrolled at American Military University for Legal Studies, graduating Summa Cum Laude Summer of 2022.

Question 2: Current or past political or public service experience:

While I was in the Air Force and stationed in Germany, I had the opportunity to serve as a Force Protection Anti-Terrorism manager. This job required me to work with other agencies within the United States Air Force, members from different branches of the United States armed forces, foreign branches of the military, and local jurisdictional entities. While doing this job, I helped pass new policies that protect our troops stationed under the United States armed forces of Europe and Africa, briefed numerous personnel on tasks, current global situations as well as local situations so that we could make the best decisions with the information that we currently had.

Question 3: What are your thoughts about the current discussion between commissioners and Baker City regarding ambulance service, in particular the possibility of asking voters to approve a property tax levy to raise revenue for the service?

The situation with the ambulance service is very disappointing to me. As a current volunteer firefighter and someone who has been volunteering as a firefighter since I was 16, it saddens me to see these jobs be put up on the chopping block as they have. I would say that as elected officials it is the members of the City Council and the County Commissioners' office to work together to fix this situation the best they can. Both parties need to be willing to openly talk with each other to find a solution that ensures the safety of the people in this county.

There has been talking of possibly bringing in a privatized ambulance service. I think that this would be a mistake, as we could be looking at the same situation down the road when we had to renegotiate a contract with the privatized company.

There has also been talking about raising taxes to help fund the ambulance services. This would be a decision that the county taxpayers should have a voice in. Raising taxes in our current economic climate would be damaging to many families and needs serious thought and consideration from everyone. If we were to ask the taxpayers to pass a levy we would need to look at passing a tax that would be fair to everyone. One thing that concerns me though about asking for a tax from the county, is how the money would actually be spent. Right now the personnel structure at Station 24 is something that you would see from one of the larger fire departments on the west side of the state. I do not feel that our fire department, or that our city and county need or require a chief and three division chiefs. What would be more beneficial for the department and the city as a whole would be using the money that is spent on three admin positions that do not respond to calls full time on more

personnel who are firefighter / EMT certified. That would help alleviate the manning issues that we are currently experiencing here in the city and the county.

I think this is a great example of how we cannot afford to kick problems down the road until they can no longer be ignored. Situations that can put the lives of our citizens at risk should not and cannot be ignored as this has been. We need to elect officials who are capable of informing the citizens of these issues, be transparent, and work with other agencies to rectify the situation as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Question 4: List and discuss your top 3 goals were you to be elected:

I hope as a taxpayer and a citizen that the issue with the Ambulance Service Area will be resolved by the time any of us that are running for the Chair position take the office in January. This could not be the case and if it is not resolved this will be one of the first things that are addressed when I am elected. I will work diligently with the city councilors to keep the jobs here in our county and with Station 24. Whether this is looking into having the county take over the ambulance services from Station 24, or looking into a levy to help pay for the ambulance services, with the caveat that the money from the county will only be used on maintaining the EMS services for the county.

The second goal I would like to accomplish would be to reevaluate our county budget and see where we have been spending money, and possibly readjusting where funds are going to more accurately represent what the taxpayers would like their hard-earned tax money to be spent on. I have already looked into the budgets a little bit and have some questions that I would like to ask some of the department heads, or even the current sitting commissioners to ask why funds are being spent on these things when we seem to have issues finding money to pay for services that are necessary to the county.

The third goal I would like to accomplish would be better transparency in our county government. I would like the citizens to know what we are doing, what we are spending money on, and what future plans could be. I think that transparency in the government is paramount. Especially since as elected officials our job is to answer to you the voters of this county. I have heard of people referring to the Commissioner positions as positions of power. I do not agree with this statement, yes there is power, but the power comes from you the people. I think a lot of career politicians forget that and need to remember that they are only in this position because the voters have seen fit to elect them to the position.

If elected I promise to hold myself accountable to you as the people of Baker County and would use all of my experience from the military and from my legal studies degree to work diligently for you the people and make the decisions that the people want, and what would be best for our county. Together we can make this one of the best counties to live, work, raise a family, and retire in. Thank you for all the support so far in my campaign.



Johnson

Dan Garrick

Question 1: Biographical information: Name, age, occupation, educational background, etc.

Occupation: Builder/general contractor. Currently taking a break while campaigning. I am currently not licensed, I discontinued my license in 2018 to work with a nonprofit organization (Eight Days of Hope) as a Rapid Response Manager.

I am the most experienced candidate at age 60.

Educational background: Northwest Nazarene College; Mount Hood Community College; Portland State University (Graduate courses).

My experience: construction manager, for LALTRC. executive director, for Hope Community Development Association; general contractor/general manager, for Moon Meadow Construction; Rapid Response Manager for Eight Days of Hope; executive board member for Eight Days of Hope Disaster relief organization.

Question 2: Current or past political or public service experience:

Served two terms on Baker School District 5J School Board, two years as board chair, while I was chair we had to cut nearly \$4 million dollars from the budget due to reduced enrollment. During this time I learned a great deal about governmental budgets and pass through money, general fund money, grant money. I feel I have a pretty good handle on governmental budgets, but I am sure I will learn even more as Commission Chair: I worked with other board members and administration to help make Baker Web Academy a reality. Served on the Baker Fairgrounds steering committee. Part of citizens group that weeded out corruption in the Eastern Oregon Education Service District.

Question 3: What are your thoughts about the current discussion between commissioners and Baker City regarding ambulance service, in particular the possibility of asking voters to approve a property tax levy to raise revenue for the service?

My thoughts are many on this subject, and I will just speak as plain as possible from what knowledge I have obtained since the City

Council meeting in which the City Manager revealed how the City has been running in the RED for approximately 10 years and has lost \$4.5 million in the last 5 years and is no longer able or willing to offer ambulance service. To keep within my allotted words, I will just list my thoughts.

- The city hired three paramedic firefighters/ambulance workers using grant money that only lasted for three years, now the grant is up and they can't afford them. I do not believe you should use grant money to hire personnel except for very short-term temporary time. The person you hire should be aware it is temporary.

- You never hear about the lost income that the city lost from inadequate ambulance billing. It could be in the hundreds of thousands. I am not sure anyone knows the exact amount, or if it is recoupable.

- County has been asking for actual numbers for the cost of ambulance service for almost 4 years. Those numbers have been all over place. What the city has ask county to pay has gone from \$137,000 to now \$750,000 and as of April 20 work session \$800,000. That is almost 1/6th of the County's general fund budget.

I have many other thoughts and ideas that you are welcome to ask me about when you see me, but to stay in my limitations I will share my feelings about the property tax levy. First the county cannot propose a levy until they know what the actual cost are going to be for ambulance service. Since the city is struggling with coming up with that amount the county must go out for an RFP (request for proposal.) This will allow both private ambulance services and the city to submit proposals for their services to include cost over a specified period of time. Once the county knows the cost then they can decide if a tax levy is necessary. The city may not have left the county with any other choice. Meetings are ongoing between city council and commissioners at the time I am writing this response. I am optimistic they can at least work out a 1-year agreement to allow the county more time than Sept. 30 to replace our ambulance service.



Garrick

Question 4: List and discuss your top 3 goals were you to be elected:

I have told everyone that I do not have any agenda going into my campaign. I don't owe anyone anything. I have learned a lot about county government and will continue to learn after I am sworn in. While campaigning I have seen needs in many areas. I believe our current commissioners do a good job with a lot of complex issues presented to them, the county also has very capable staff.

I do see areas that will require a lot of time. They need to continue receiving the existing attention that they receive now or improve their status on my attention list. First would be natural resources. The following listed items will get my immediate attention.

- Defeating the River Democracy Act. This is a giant land grab by the federal government. It would take thousands of acres around rivers and streams throughout Oregon and 4,700 miles of waterway like Rock Creek, and designate them wild and scenic.

- Access, access, access. We need to keep our forest, and roads, open to all. The county needs to continue to fight the Forest Service and BLM to keep our open forest plan. Baker County is all about outdoor recreation and we want to keep it that way. We need to continue to coordinate with the Forest Service and cities to properly maintain all of the watersheds in Baker County. Baker City's watershed should have approximately 50 trees per acre depending on size, and we have as many as 1,000 trees per acre. Access also means mining access. Forest Service has had some POOs (plans of operation) since the 1990s that have not been approved. That means they have not been able to access their mining claims to mine for nearly 30 years. Unacceptable from a public service agency. Mining is part of our Baker County heritage. Mining is what started the Baker Valley.

- I will be looking for creative and out of the box ideas to create revenue for the county without taxing citizens. Bring in the smartest, wisest, the senior adults, the young, men,

The Baker County Clerk's Office mailed ballots on Wednesday, April 27, for the May 17 primary. Ballots must be returned by 8 p.m. on election day. However, ballots that are returned by mail, and postmarked by 8 p.m. on May 17, will be counted if they get to the clerk's office no later than seven days after the election.

Two of the three Baker County Board of Commissioners positions are on the ballot. Neither Bill Harvey, commission chairman and the only full-time commissioner, nor part-time Commissioner Mark Bennett, is seeking reelection this year.

Both positions are four-year terms. Three people are seeking to replace Harvey, in Position 3 — Shane Alderson, Dan Garrick and Joe Johnson. All are Baker City residents.

There are two candidates for Bennett's Position 2 — Kody Justus, who lives in Baker Valley, and Christina Witham of Baker City.

In both races, if one candidate receives more than half the votes in the May 17 primary, that candidate would be elected to a four-year term starting Jan. 1, 2023.

If none of the candidates receives more than half the votes, the top two candidates would advance to a runoff in the Nov. 8, 2022, general election.

women from all parts of the county, and all walks of life and put our heads together, listen to each other and respect each other. We can do more together than alone. "None of us is as smart as all of us."

- It appears that one of the top priorities will be to make sure what has been put in place by current commissioners to provide ambulance service is completed. This is assuming that a tax levy is put out to the voters in May of 2023.

- Incremental economic development is another area that I see requiring a good bit of time. We need to continue to support existing small businesses and help with new startups. We need to be able keep young families in Baker with family wage income jobs. Our biggest export is our children.

- You can learn more about me and my ideas at www.dg4commissioner.com

OREGON

Appeals court nixes \$1.1 billion timber award against Oregon

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals on Wednesday, April 27, overturned a \$1.1 billion verdict against the state over its forest management practices, the latest development in a decades-long dispute over the best use of vast tracts of forestland that cover much of the state's rural areas.

A Linn County jury found in 2019 that Oregon breached its

contract with 13 rural counties and 151 local taxing districts by failing to maximize timber harvests on state forests over the last two decades. The counties have said Oregon must manage more than 700,000 acres of state forestland for maximum timber revenue, while the state Department of Forestry believes it has the discretion to manage the land for wildlife and recreation.

The plaintiffs can appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court.

At the heart of the dispute is an 80-year-old Forest Acquisition Act, which governed the transfer of county lands that now make up Oregon's state forests.

The counties which stand to gain from timber revenue on those lands say the act represents a contract between the parties, and point to language in

it that requires Oregon to manage the forest for their "greatest permanent value." The state has maintained that the act was not a contractual agreement and that the counties don't have standing to sue the state.

The appeals court, in its decision, wrote that the language and intent of that act in its history and context — and without any "useful" legislative action on the issue — "does not

clearly and unmistakably create a contractual obligation."

The law was originally enacted when hundreds of thousands of acres of Oregon forests were logged or burned by wildfire and the counties turned them over to the state in exchange for a share of revenue generated by the land. But the forests have now recovered and comprise some of the best timber stands in the state.

The decision threatens to create further divisions between rural and urban Oregon that have arisen over clashes over logging. Timber harvests have declined steeply in rural areas of the state in recent decades due to environmental protections and both environmentalists and the timber industry have been closely watching the case.