

Baker County Commission, Position 2

Kody Justus

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

Kody Justus
Age: 51
Occupation: Cattle rancher
Educational background: Graduated Baker High School 1989; Future Farmers of America leadership; Department of Public Standards and Training; Basic Corrections at Western Oregon University at Monmouth; American Lands Council Seminar with Utah State Representative Ken Ivory on the transfer of public lands; Attorney Fred Kelly Grant's Coordination seminar 101.

Occupational background: 1989-92 US Army, served in Germany and Kuwait; former correctional officer; former state brand inspector; ranch operations including, management, budgeting, hiring, and ownership.

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

Previous elected Precinct Committee Person; Previous Vice-Chair of Baker County Republican Party; Previous Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee member; Member of Forest Access for All; and Member/Volunteer Agape Christian Center.

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 about the current discussion between commissioners and Baker City regarding ambulance service is as follows:

My understanding is that Baker City has \$800,000 of expenses attributed to the ambulance service in the current year and \$900,000 in receipts from ambulance billings. That includes money from the county. In essence, the ambulance service is running at a net zero or breaking even. The city manager has made projections, that because of population growth, the increase in call volume will require the city to hire three more staff and buy an additional ambulance, thus creating a million-dollar shortfall. This estimation seems unrealistic considering our housing constraints. The real loser in all this is the city fire department. By discontinuing ambulance service, the Baker City Fire Department will lose six staff because the current EMS staff are crosstrained as firefighters. This move cuts the fire department in

half. The fire department will lose the ability to enter burning buildings, essentially making it impossible to stop a fire on Main Street where the buildings are connected.

It is clear to me the city manager is not interested in providing ambulance service. I, personally, would like to see a county-wide EMS/Fire District formed. This would allow the fire/EMS crosstraining to continue to be used outside of the city's management. A tax levy could be assessed to the district and it would have its own board of directors, which would eliminate the current negotiating between two governing bodies. However, that requires time to develop and put on a ballot. To keep the fire department intact, it will require a willingness from Baker City to continue ambulance service past the 9/30/22 deadline they have declared.

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

My top 3 goals are as follows:

- Securing individual rights of each person within Baker County. I believe that is the sole reason government exists. In the Declaration of Independence, it is stated that "to secure these rights, governments are instituted."
- The Baker County budget. Every dollar spent in the county budget was first secured as payment from a private citizen. We need responsible spending and living within our means. What is done individually can be accomplished corporately.
- Transparency within Baker County. Confidence in our governing bodies is at an all time low. The way back is through transparent application of our procedural process. I encourage public involvement at every stage.



Justus

Christina Witham

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

Christina Witham, 52
Owner at Oregon Sign Company, LLC
Graduated BHS

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

No past political office.
I have worked extensively with local groups on the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision to retain public access to our county, WWNF and other public roads, lands and natural resources for now and for future generations.

I served as President, Vice President and other chairs in past years as a member of Soroptimist International of Baker County.

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?

I believe that Baker County is doing their best to find a resolution to this unfortunate situation. Coming from a business background, I don't see how a city can run in the red for multiple years, depend on outside sources for funding, not change up the business plan/budget/accounting and expect to be rescued at the last minute as the city appears to have done. When an RFP goes out to ambulance services, we know that they have to meet or exceed the current expectations asked of the BCFD ambulance service. An ambulance service can be profitable and we do not know at this time



Witham

if a tax levy will be necessary, I sincerely hope that a tax levy can be avoided but this is an ongoing and ever-changing situation.

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

1. Continue to support the progress that has been made on the access issues throughout our public lands and to promote the use of natural resources.
A healthy forest equals a healthy community. We need to keep our "open" forest open and accessible for all uses of our natural resources. Timber harvesting and grazing will not only create revenue but decrease fuel loads that lead to devastating forest fires. We need access to fight fires, access to grazing allotments, mining claims, hiking trails, huckleberry and mushroom patches, firewood cutting, recreation and peace of mind to name a few. We know that our military veterans benefit from having access and we definitely need to unlock locked gates.

2. Building a stronger economy for businesses, ranchers, communities and families.

Supporting each and every one of our rural communities is first and foremost. Each of our small communities throughout the county has unique challenges and needs that have to be addressed. Identifying the voids in our economy from the bottom up would help to rise up small business, give ranchers better options, higher employment rates and healthier families. I encourage the idea of a beef kill/processing plant introduced to me by Bill and Dawn Simpson of Elkhorn Custom Meats. We have to make sure that ranchers have water and any other resources needed to produce. Support our downtowns and small businesses by shopping local. Sell local, buy local and we all thrive.

3. Listening and coming to you with a common sense approach.

I am here for you, I am your voice, I will listen. I know that I will need to come alongside, learn and then support our county employees and I am looking forward to it. Our nation as a whole is divided, our state is divided and we, as Baker County, need to stay united. We need to talk to our neighbors as close to middle ground as possible. We need to solve issues and come together in order to be stronger, better together.

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.

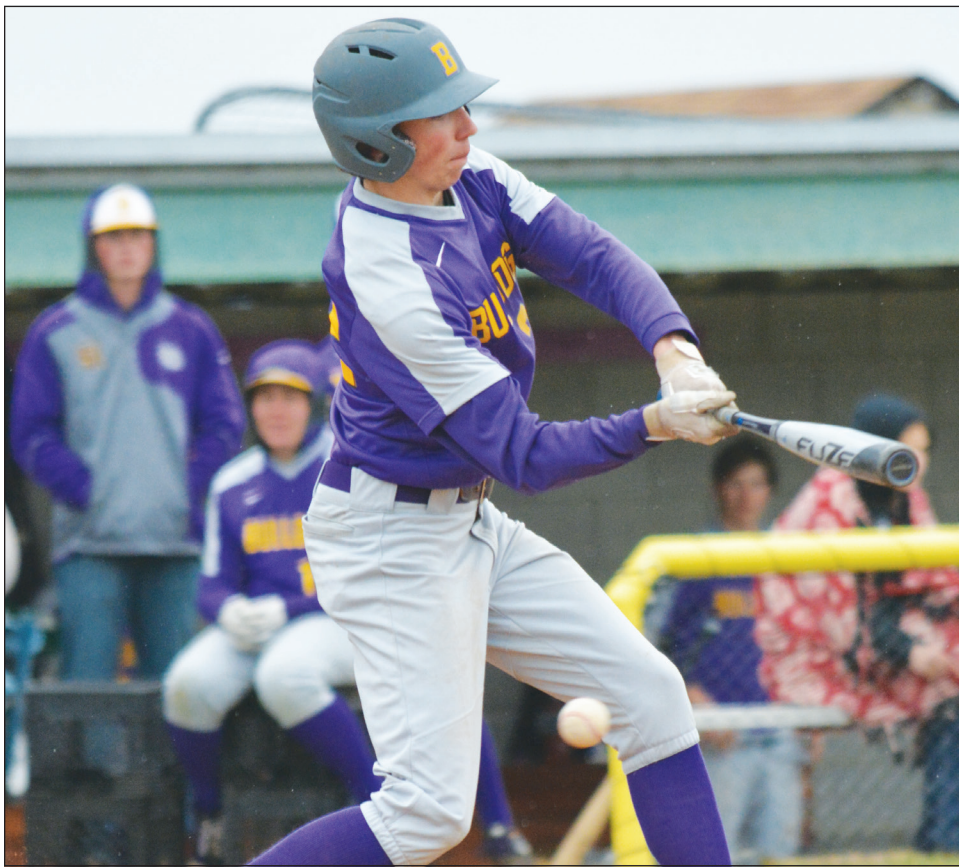
In both races, if one candidate receives more than half the votes in the May 17 primary, that candidate would be elected to a four-year term starting Jan. 1, 2023.

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.

SPORTS

BAKER BASEBALL

Baker rallies to beat Heppner/Ione, 11-8



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Baker's Kai Ogan bats against La Grande on April 20, 2022. Ogan went 3 for 3 with 3 RBIs, including a key two-run triple, in Baker's 11-8 come-from-behind win over Heppner/Ione on Monday, April 25, 2022, at the Sports Complex.

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Baker was breezing to a non-league baseball win on Monday, April 25, at the Sports Complex until Heppner/Ione decided not to play the hapless victim.

After falling behind 4-0 and 7-3 early in the game, the Mustangs took advantage of a few Baker miscues to score five runs in the top of the sixth inning and take an 8-7 lead.

It was a brief lead.

The Bulldogs, coming off a thrilling 2-1 come-from-behind win over Philomath on Saturday, April 23, and determined not to squander the momentum from that victory, rallied in the bottom of the sixth to regain the lead.

And unlike the earlier lead, this was one Baker wouldn't relinquish.

Hudson Spike and Jaxon Logsdon started the rally with singles.

Spike scored on Logan Capon's sacrifice fly to tie the score at 8.

Cole Hester followed with a double that scored Logsdon and gave Baker a 9-8 lead.

Then, with two outs, Kai Ogan, who went 3 for 3 with

three RBIs, pounded a triple that scored two runs and pushed Baker's lead to 11-8.

Relief pitcher Connor Chastain, who replaced Hayden Younger with two outs in the top of the sixth, set the Mustangs down in order in the top of the seventh to end the game.

Baker coach Tim Smith said he was happy with Baker's resilience after squandering the early lead.

"We talked about it between (the top and bottom of the sixth inning)," Smith said. "We kind of had a chip on our shoulder. They responded well, and took the game back over."

He also credited Chastain with preventing the Mustangs from mounting a last-inning rally.

"We really like Connor in that relief role," Smith said. "He came in and threw strikes and kept the ball down."

Baker started fast on a mild Monday evening when the Bulldogs donned pink uniforms to help raise awareness about breast cancer.

Baker took a 1-0 lead after one inning on Logsdon's RBI double. The freshman went 4 for 4 with 2 RBIs.

Hepp/Ione	0 0 3 0 0 5 0 — 8
Baker	1 3 3 0 0 4 x — 11
Wilkins,	George (5) and
Proudfoot,	Capon, Younger
(4),	Chastain (6) and Logsdon.

Baker extended the lead to 4-0 in the second inning when Younger hit a two-run single and Logsdon drove in another run with a single.

Heppner cut the lead to 4-3 on Toby Nation's 3-run homer in the top of the third, but the Bulldogs responded immediately with three runs of their own in the bottom of the inning.

Thomas Smithson and Hester both singled, and Smithson scored on Chastain's bunt single. Ogan later hit an RBI single to boost Baker's lead to 7-3.

Baker, which improved to 10-8 overall, returns to Greater Oregon League play on Friday, April 29, when the Bulldogs play host to Mac-Hi in a double-header at the Sports Complex.

First pitch is set for 2 p.m. Baker, which is 4-2 in the GOL, swept the Pioneers on April 6 at Milton-Freewater.

LOCAL

Council

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McQuisten, Waggoner and Dixon, who want to let voters decide on the quiet zone application, voted no.

Damschen, who became the swing vote on the issue after he was appointed in March and sworn in on April 12, said in an interview on Wednesday, April 27, that he changed his mind, about whether the matter should go to voters, based on the estimated 20 to 30 hours of research he did about quiet zones after the April 12 meeting.

Damschen said he didn't know much about the quiet zone issue when he was sworn in at the start of the April 12 meeting. The issue wasn't on the agenda, and when Dixon made a motion to refer the issue to voters, Damschen said he consid-

ered recusing himself, given his lack of familiarity with the topic. He said he eventually voted yes because he wasn't sure whether it was proper for him to recuse himself.

But after the April 12 meeting, Damschen said he committed himself to learning about quiet zones and talking to residents about the issue.

He said he spoke with many people he knows as well as some who queried him about the issue. He said he also talked with some business owners and with one representative from the local group that is promoting the quiet zone and is raising money for the upgrades to railroad crossings.

Damschen said he also spoke with the city manager and public works director in La Grande, which qualified for a quiet zone in 2019, and researched noise pollution.

"I came to the realization that it's (a quiet zone) really go-

ing to be good for the town," Damschen said. "I felt that it didn't need to go to the ballot."

Damschen said he hopes residents understand that he changed his mind about whether the city should refer the quiet zone question to voters because of the information he gleaned from his research and conversations.

"It's never the wrong choice to go back and rethink your decision and make the right one, or a better one," he said.

McQuisten, who has advocated for letting city voters decide whether the city applies for a quiet zone, criticized her four colleagues for Tuesday's vote.

"This is what happens when you have elected officials who are tone deaf to the majority of the community, not interested in the will of the people, and focused on appeasing a vocal minority special interest group," McQuisten said. "They know they are making a deci-

sion that most citizens in Baker City do not want, and I believe that is their exact reason for keeping it off the ballot."

Guyer, who proposed and voted for the motion at the Jan. 25 meeting for the city to apply for a quiet zone, with the provision that the local group raise the money for crossing upgrades, said members of that group talked with him after the April 12 meeting when, with Guyer absent, Dixon made the motion to put the matter on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Guyer called that decision "just wrong."

"It's wrong for you to allow people to go ahead and put energy and effort into it and then say, no, we're going to back off, we're going to change the rules to how the game is played," he said. "So you've got all this energy and cost involved in the process and then you pull the rug out from underneath them and that's just not how things

are done, in my book anyway."

Guyer also said he believes that Damschen, who voted in favor of Dixon's motion on April 12, "really was not given enough time to understand the complexities of the vote and when it was brought up."

In other business Tuesday, the council:

- Voted unanimously to approve installing signs at Fourth and Grace streets, near South Baker Intermediate School, as part of the Baker School District's plan to re-route buses for picking up and dropping off students.

The stop signs will be for southbound traffic on Fourth Street and for eastbound traffic on Grace Street. Buses, which now park on Grace Street on the north side of the school, will, starting this fall, turn right from Fourth onto Carter Street, one block north of Grace, then turn left onto Fifth Street and continue south, using a cur-

rently unopened section of Fifth Street that will be opened, to enter the school grounds, where a new bus lane will be built. Buses will exit by driving north on Fourth Street.

Owen, the city's public works director, said the district's plan is better than another option which had the potential for traffic to back up to the east, onto Dewey Avenue.

The district's goal is to reduce congestion along Grace Street and in areas north of the school, where currently both parents and buses congregate. Starting this fall, buses will load and drop off in the school grounds south of Grace Street.

- Voted unanimously to approve the first two readings of an ordinance restricting camping in city parks and some other public property. The ordinance, proposed by Police Chief Ty Duby, is designed to deal with homeless people camping.