



**LOCAL A2**  
Jobless rate down, but hiring remains a challenge



**SPORTS A6**  
Nine Baker baseball players earn all-league honors

# Baker City Herald

IN THIS EDITION: LOCAL • OUTDOORS & REC • SPORTS

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**QUICK HITS**

**Good Day Wish To A Subscriber**

A special good day to Herald subscriber Arthur Blankenship of Huntington.

**BRIEFING**

**Elliott Averett earns law degree from Georgetown**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Elliott Averett, a Baker High School graduate, earned summa cum laude honors when he graduated from Georgetown University law school on May 22, 2022.

**'Jungle Book' coming to Baker City**

There's still time to register for the Missoula Children's Theatre camp of "Jungle Book" on June 13-18 in Baker City.

Auditions are at 10 a.m. Monday, June 13, at Baker High School. The cast is open to students in grades 1 through 12. Rehearsals are held throughout the week and culminate in public performances at 6 p.m. Friday, June 17, and 3 p.m. Saturday, June 18.

MCT is brought to town by Crossroads Carnegie Art Center. Registration for the camp is \$40 for Crossroads members, or \$60 for nonmembers. Scholarships are available.

Register at [www.crossroads-arts.org](http://www.crossroads-arts.org) or call 541-523-5369.

**WEATHER**

**Today**  
74/52  
Showers

**Sunday**  
60/41  
Showers

**Monday**  
54/37  
Showers

Full forecast on the back of the B section.

## Commissioners confident in new ambulance provider

### Metro West Ambulance required by law to give hiring preference, for 6 months, to laid off Baker City Fire Dept. employees

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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All three Baker County commissioners said they're confident that Metro West Ambulance, the Hillsboro company commissioners picked to operate ambulances in Baker City and much of the rest of the county, will maintain the level of service residents expect.

"I'm comfortable with the level of service they will provide to the citizens of Baker County," Commission Chairman Bill Harvey said on Thursday, June 9.

The day before, commis-

sioners voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of a committee, whose members were appointed by commissioners last month, to negotiate a five-year contract with Metro West, which is based in Hillsboro.

The county received one other proposal, from Capstone Transportation, which operates as Victory EMS in Southern Idaho.

(Pdf copies of both proposals are available for download at [www.bakercityherald.com](http://www.bakercityherald.com).)

One of the more significant differences between the two proposals is dollars.

Capstone requested that Baker County and Baker City provide a subsidy of \$1,280,000 for the first year, with an expected 3% annual increase thereafter.

Metro West did not request any financial subsidy for the duration of the contract.

That difference alone made Metro West an obvious choice, Commissioner Bruce Nichols said on Thursday, June 9.

"Basically it was an easy pick," he said.

Nichols, Harvey and the third commissioner, Mark Bennett, all cited Metro West's extensive experience as another clear advantage.

"They do have a lot of experience, and that makes me



Harvey



Nichols



Bennett

emergency transports as well as non-emergency — what's known as "pre hospital care."

Harvey said the factor that most persuaded him to prefer Metro West was the

feel better," Nichols said. "I feel pretty comfortable with it."

Metro West was founded in 1953, and the company has seven advanced life support ambulance services in Oregon, three in Washington state and one in California, according to its proposal to Baker County.

Capstone has been operating in Idaho for four years, and the company offers non-emergency transports.

The ambulance provider in Baker County handles

unanimous recommendation from the advisory committee, whose members included Tony Alexander, Wayne Endersby, Debra Duggan, Pat Sullivan, David Richards, Loran Joseph and Jeanne Peacock.

"They did the homework and they all agreed that these (Metro West) are the folks we should be going with," Harvey said. "I'm quite comfortable with the choice they made."

See, **Contract**/Page A3

## Park performances

*Powder River Music Review season starts Sunday, June 12*

Travel Baker County, File  
**The Powder River Music Review will open for the season on Sunday, June 12, 2022, with a performance by the Inland Northwest Musicians. The orchestra performed at Geiser-Pollman Park on Aug. 8, 2021.**

BY LISA BRITTON  
[lbritton@bakercityherald.com](mailto:lbritton@bakercityherald.com)

The Powder River Music Review begins this season with a patriotic twist and recognition of special sponsors on Sunday, June 12.

The music series, organized by the nonprofit Baker City Events, brings live music to Geiser-Pollman Park every Sunday through the summer, starting at 4 p.m.

Admission is free. Donations are welcome, and raffle tickets are sold for the chance to win weekly prizes.

June 12 features the Inland Northwest Musicians and their "Outdoor Patriotic and Entertaining Pops Concert." This concert series is supported by sponsors, grants and donations, said

Lynette Perry, a volunteer with Baker City Events.

This year, she said BCE nominated two sponsors — Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative and Sorbenots — for a "sponsor of the year" Ovation Award with the Oregon Festivals and Events Association.

"Competition is statewide," Perry said. "Imagine competing with the Oregon State Fair and other large west-side events." The Baker City nomination won.

See, **Music**/Page A6

## 'Atmospheric river' could flow into Baker County

### Heavy rain possible this weekend

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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The spring has been decidedly drippy in Baker County — and occasionally flaky, with snow on Mother's Day — but the next storm in the series might be the soggiest yet.

The National Weather Service office in Boise, which issues forecasts for Baker County, is tracking what meteorologists call an "atmospheric river."

As its name implies, this is an abnormally saturated storm that taps into the copious moisture in the tropical South Pacific and brings it into the West.

"A significant amount of moisture, with origins in the tropics will move into the Pacific NW and then across the rest of the West by Sunday," a meteorologist wrote in the forecast discussion from the Boise office on Thursday, June 9. "Dewpoints will reach the upper 50s to low 60s, which will feel quite humid for our standards. The ample moisture aloft will pose a flash flooding threat and significant river rises over the weekend."

The storm will interrupt what has been the warmest week of the year.

Most of the rain in Baker County is forecast to fall from Saturday through Sunday night, with a slight chance of showers on Monday, June 13.

See, **Rain**/Page A3

The space below is for a postage label for issues that are mailed.

## South Baker School bus lane project delayed

### School district didn't receive any bids for the project

Baker City Herald

The Baker School District's plan to build a new bus lane at South Baker Intermediate School has been postponed.

District officials had hoped to do the project this summer, but the district didn't receive any bids for the work, said Lindsey McDowell, the district's public information and communications coordinator.

"At this time, I think the district plans to rebid the project in the fall," McDowell said.

The district's goal is to deal with traffic congestion at South Baker, the school at 1285 Third St. that houses fourth, fifth and sixth graders. Now, buses as well as par-



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

**Mark Witty, Baker School District superintendent, stands outside South Baker Intermediate on Friday, Feb. 4, 2022. The district plans to revamp the bus lane at the school to reduce congestion with parents' vehicles. The project has been delayed due to a lack of contractor bids.**

ents pick up and drop off students in the same area, the one-way block of Grace Street between Third and Fourth streets on the north side of the school.

Mark Witty, district superintendent, said this winter that the situation forces many

parents to park elsewhere in the neighborhood and requires students to cross one or more streets.

"We're trying to avoid that," Witty said in February 2022. "It's been a goal for a number of years to make this area safer."

The district's solution is to separate the bus loading and unloading zone from where parents pick up and drop off students.

Buses, which now travel south on Fourth Street to Grace Street, would instead turn right one block north, on Carter Street, and then continue south on Fifth Street.

That street right-of-way extends south of Grace Street into the northwest corner of the South Baker playground.

The Baker City Council this spring approved the district's request to open that section of Fifth Street for buses.

The district will pave a lane for buses and install a fence between that lane and the playground, Witty said.

When buses leave the school, they'll drive north on Fourth Street, avoiding Grace Street altogether.

Wayne Paxton, the district's transportation supervisor,

came up with the proposal a few years ago to alleviate congestion as buses and parents' vehicles vied for the same limited amount of space.

He said there's room for three buses now in the bus lane on the south side of Grace Street next to the school.

"It's just really tight," Paxton said. "I think this is going to open it up quite a bit and be safer."

Witty said the change won't eliminate potential conflicts between buses and other vehicles.

Buses heading north on Fourth Street, for instance, will cross Grace Street where parents will turn left.

But Witty said he's convinced the situation will be safer since buses and cars won't be parking close to each other.

The bus lane project is not one of the jobs the district will do with money from the \$4 million bond that district voters approved in May 2021.



**TODAY**  
Issue 14  
14 pages

Classified.....B2-B4	Crossword.....B2 & B4	Jayson Jacoby.....A4	Opinion.....A4	Sports.....A6
Comics.....B5	Dear Abby.....B6	Lottery Results.....A2	Outdoors.....B1 & B2	Turning Backs.....A2
Community News.....A2	Horoscope.....B2 & B4	News of Record.....A2	Senior Menus.....A2	Weather.....B6