

EDITORIAL

Late, but welcome, news for FireMed members

The effects have continued to mount from the Baker City Council's ill-considered decision to remove ambulance service from the Baker City Fire Department's list of duties, but fortunately one of those has been remedied.

Although over the past month or so many local residents have had to worry about whether they would be saddled with an ambulance bill they had every reason to believe they wouldn't get.

The city announced Thursday, July 7 that Metro West Ambulance, the Hillsboro company that is replacing the city fire department as local ambulance provider, will honor FireMed memberships, which cover the cost of ground ambulance transports.

The issue had not been certain because Metro West, unlike the city, does not participate in the FireMed program.

The city's announcement, belated though it is, should be a relief, particularly for any FireMed members who have been transported by the Metro West Ambulance over the past month or so.

Although the Baker City Fire Department is slated to continue operating an ambulance through Sept. 30, 2022, Metro West is the first-call ambulance, meaning the city ambulance is dispatched only if Metro West is already out on a call.

From June 16 to July 5, Metro West transported 52 patients to Saint Alphonsus Medical Center-Baker City, while the fire department transported just 13 patients.

This situation stems from the city council's notice to Baker County commissioners on March 22, stating the city's intention to cease ambulance service as of Oct. 1, 2022. That contributed to a decision by at least two firefighter/paramedics to take jobs elsewhere.

That attrition in turn prompted Fire Chief Sean Lee to notify county officials in May that the city, due to staffing shortages, might not be able to respond to multiple simultaneous emergency calls.

The county responded by declaring an emergency and by hiring a private company, AMR, to temporarily bring an ambulance to Baker City.

Then on June 8, county commissioners, who by Oregon law are required to ensure ambulance service, decided to contract with Metro West, one of two companies that submitted a proposal.

A memorandum from City Manager Jonathan Cannon, updated on Thursday, states in part: "Metro West indicated in a phone conversation on 7/6/2022 they will honor FireMed memberships until September 30, 2022. This means if you ride in a Metro West or Baker City ambulance your FireMed membership will be valid. If you receive a bill from Metro West and are a FireMed member then you should call Metro West at (541) 266-4300."

Metro West has a membership program similar to FireMed, and the company stated, in a letter to the county, that it plans to offer that service to local residents.

It's welcome news that local FireMed members will be covered. It's a pity, though, that they were in limbo for the past month.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Joe Biden: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

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U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (2nd District): D.C. office: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97505; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario, OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. bentz.house.gov.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

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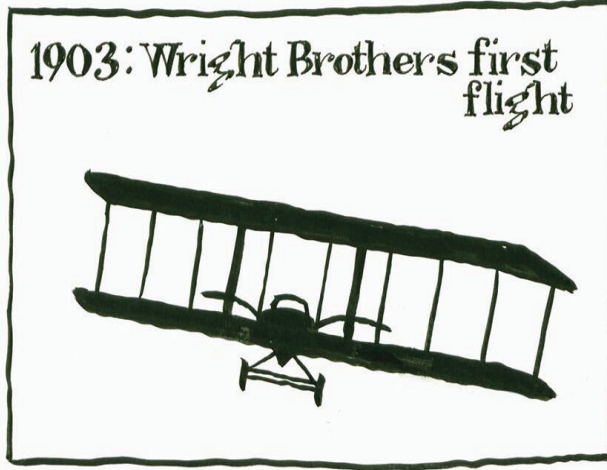
Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

State Sen. Lynn Findley (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Councilors Jason Spriet, Kerry McQuisten, Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Kenyon Damschen, Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Dean Guyer.

Aviation Milestones



2022:
Your flight
departs and
arrives on
time



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YOUR VIEWS

Thanks to Richard Fox for not being afraid to stand up

I want to say thank you to Mr. Richard Fox for your recent letters to the editor. The love for our Creator God, who made this nation possible, means everything to me. Our Founding Fathers drew wisdom from the Word of God, as they sought out those guiding principles that have served as our foundation. The idea that we have been endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights, was a concept unique to any previous nation. When they wrote the Constitution they were "securing the blessings of liberty" that we have enjoyed for 246 years.

There are many people in our nation today, who want to corrupt and destroy that foundation. It is time for people, who love this country, to stand up and fight to protect what our Founders gave to us. Thank you, Mr. Fox, for not being afraid to stand and speak the truth.

Tammy Meyer
Baker City

New precinct committee person wants to meet with GOP voters

An open letter to all our neighbors: My wife and I walked our precinct in the run-up to the May 17 primary election. We were able to contact over 100 voters. My explanation for coming to their door was that in all the years I had lived here

I had never had one precinct committee person visit our home. Never. I told them that if I was elected they would see me again. June 21 I was certified by the County Clerk as being elected a GOP Central Committee PCP. I want to thank all of you who voted for me. I look forward to living up to my promise to you.

The PCP is the least known part of the political party system. When we speak of the "tree of liberty" it may be helpful to visualize it as a mighty tree wrapped in the protective bark of the Constitution and Bill Of Rights. This tree is rooted in the nurturing soil of our population. We, the PCPs, are the tiny roots that feed into the larger roots, carrying the wishes of the people upward, into the heart of the political structure to the elected. Those elected to office are employees of the people. They are charged with administering and operating the government in accordance and within the restrictions of the Constitution. Their oath of office so declares. I gave my oath to "defend and protect" at 17, upon entering military service. That oath remains active to this day.

Unlike other systems of governance, where the top dictates to the masses, we as a Constitutional Republic are driven by the will of the people. You, the people count on us, as your local direct connection, to carry your message forward. Washington, D.C., may be out of reach but locally your county should never be oblivious to the thoughts and direction

of our citizens. That is where the PCPs come into the picture. As members of the Central Committee we should be as close to you as next door, eager to engage in conversation with you. While both major parties have Central Committees it would be hard to prove it as they seem to be hiding in plain sight. The local GOP is notorious for having closed meetings with only selected individual PCPs being advised of the meetings. This in contravention of ORS 248.012. For an overview of your local CC's operational requirements, look up ORS 248.012 through ORS 248.045. This can give you a sense of the law as it applies to the operation of the Central Committees under specific Oregon law.

Living up to the promise I made during my campaign, I as your representative PCP intend to be available to you. In gratitude for the confidence of your vote and to reaffirm my commitment, I plan to schedule periodic meetings in public locations where we can meet and talk. I will support the Republican platform and the Constitutional path we must follow. We can gather to discuss the issues that bother you the most. Together we will seek a way to carry forward our community's collective vision to restore America. We must remind our elected employees that we, the people, are the heart and soul of our government.

Rick Rienks
Baker City

COLUMN

When will fueling up mean plugging in?

I wonder how long it will take to train myself to plug in a car when I'm done with it for the day.

This ought not be onerous, certainly. I've long since incorporated into my routine connecting my cellphone to a charging cord, a daily task so instinctive I scarcely notice I'm doing it.

But the phone, unlike a vehicle, fits in my jacket pocket and generally resides on the table beside my bed. This makes it rather easier to keep track of than a car parked in the driveway.

Probably this would be a simpler matter if I owned a garage, but adding another structure to the place — other than, say, a new sun umbrella — is beyond my current financial means.

(And even further beyond my own construction abilities, so even if I could afford the materials I could never assemble them without inflicting serious injuries both physical and aesthetic.)

The advantage of having a garage in which to park an electric car, it seems to me, is that the garage typically has electrical outlets. I suspect this accessibility would help me to remember to plug in, much as lacking a garage helps me to remember to lock the car doors when I get out.

As it stands now (or, rather, doesn't stand, given the absence of a garage), the source of kilowatt-hours nearest the driveway is on the wall beside our front porch, which we almost never use as an entrance.

(This is invariably confusing to people who arrive but who aren't familiar with my family's unconventional ingress and egress preferences.)

This is a purely hypothetical exercise now, to be sure.

Both of our cars are powered by gasoline, and we don't intend to replace either for many years.

(Although the idea doesn't seem as far-fetched as it did when the first number on the signs at gas stations was a "3" rather



Jayson Jacoby

than a "5.")

I try to keep up to speed, as it were, on the automotive industry, and just recently I've read in my favorite magazines multiple articles detailing automakers' aggressive plans to electrify their fleets.

More than a century has passed since the industry had so little interest in internal combustion.

Fully electric vehicles (as distinct from hybrids such as the familiar Toyota Prius) are as yet pretty rare, to be sure.

I spent the weekend at my parents' house recently and although they live near the Willamette Valley, where Teslas are far more common than in Eastern Oregon, those most renowned of battery-powered cars still far enough short of ubiquity that my parents exclaim whenever they see one. I'm reminded of my childhood when we would look for VW Beetles for the singular pleasure of yelling "slug bug!" (And possibly landing a blow on a sibling's shoulder.)

In 2021 Americans bought about half a million purely electric cars. That's an 89% increase from 2020.

But it's also just 3% of the total new vehicle market.

The titans in the industry, however, vow that the situation will change dramatically over the next decade or so.

(Tesla, notwithstanding its major cultural effect, is not among those titans.)

General Motors, for instance, plans to assemble 2 million electric cars in North America and China by 2025, CEO Mary Barra says. The automaker has committed to spend \$35 billion by 2025 to create 30 electric models. Its far more ambitious goal is to go all electric by 2035.

Ford Motor Company intends to build 600,000 EVs per year by 2024. More sig-

nificantly, the company's goal is to have electrics make up half its global sales by 2030.

Those numbers seem extraordinary to me. And carmakers don't always fulfill their more grandiose projections.

But notwithstanding the possibility that the companies are overstating their targets — and not coincidentally burnishing their reputations for environmental awareness — I have little doubt that EVs will claim a steadily growing share of new vehicle sales for the rest of my life.

Which, if the actuarial tables can be trusted, is apt to be a few more decades.

I'm fascinated by the prospects for these latter years of my driving career.

When I walked out of the DMV with my license on my 16th birthday, in 1986, the only electric implements I can recall in our garage were the garage door opener and a pair of hedge clippers that resembled a medieval torture device if medieval torturers had had access to electricity.

(Which they did not, to the good fortune of a significant number of serfs and other hapless people.)

The cars, by contrast, not only all burned gas, but they mixed the fuel with air by way of carburetors, a technology more appropriate for the 19th century than for the 21st.

My daughter, Olivia, recently turned 15. She passed the test for her learner's permit on her birthday, and is beginning to master the dexterity needed to operate not only a car, but also a manual transmission.

(Both of our vehicles, besides having gas engines, also have clutches, a device almost as rare these days as the carburetor.)

I suppose it's not a certainty that I'll ever buy a fully electric vehicle.

But I wouldn't wager as much as a dollar that neither Olivia nor her brother, Max, who's 11, will never sign their names to a sales contract for a vehicle that gets around purely on kilowatts.

■ Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.