



Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

Volunteers carry the American flag during the Shrine parade on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, in downtown Baker City.

Scenes from the Shrine Parade



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Both Shrine queens are from the Baker City area. Poppy Ann Jones, left, was the West queen, and Hannah Cartwright was the East queen for the 2022 game.



Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

A classic car from the Hillah Shriners in Douglas County rolls down Baker City's Main Street during the Shrine Parade on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022.



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Baldwin, a steer raised by Harley Coburn of Durkee, was auctioned at halftime of the East-West Shrine All-Star football game on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, raising about \$21,000 for the Shriners Hospital for Children in Portland.

House

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The lot, which covers almost 5,000 square feet, has a market value of \$31,330, according to the Assessor's Office.

The police department, not the building department, deals with property maintenance violations.

But earlier this year, Police Chief Ty DUBY applied for and received an administrative search warrant that allowed Kitzmiller and other city officials to inspect the interior of the home.

Kitzmiller said that inspection happened on April 7. She said the home is in "terrible" condition.

Walls have been removed, and the ceiling is failing, with insulation and electrical wiring falling through the ceiling.

"At some point that structure would have failed," Kitzmiller said. "It was in terrible shape."

Kitzmiller said she met with Gwin soon after and told him she would be sending an official letter declaring the home unsafe to occupy.

She gave him until mid May to submit a plan for either repairing the house — which Kitzmiller said she didn't think was feasible given the likely cost — or dismantling it.

That didn't happen, and as a result the city hired Lost Soul Contracting, a Baker City business, to tear down the home and haul away the remnants.

The business' owner, Eric Swanlund, is charging the city \$125 per hour, Kitzmiller said. She said Swanlund expected the work would take one or two days.



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Work began on Monday, Aug. 8, 2022, to dismantle a home in east Baker City that the city's building official declared unsafe to occupy.

Kitzmiller said the city will seek to attach a lien to the property so that even if it's sold, the city will be reimbursed for the cost of dismantling the home.

Kitzmiller said on Monday that she wasn't celebrating that it became necessary to tear down the home.

"I'm sorry for Mr. Gwin, but he's been given so many chances," she said.

Gwin could not be reached for comment by press time on Monday.

He declined to comment on the situation earlier this year after Kerns designated the home as a chronic neighborhood nuisance.

Kitzmiller said she would have preferred that Gwin ar-

range to have his home torn down, but she said that didn't seem likely to happen.

She said she decided to have the city hire a contractor in part because an asbestos assessment was negative, meaning the city didn't have to remove asbestos, which can be expensive, before tearing down the home.

Kitzmiller said siding and flooring that often contain asbestos were mostly gone, so there weren't the usual sources of asbestos in older homes.

Neighbors react to removal of home

Over the years, several people who live near Gwin's home have expressed their

disgust with the condition of the home. Some have lobbied the Baker City Council to do something about the situation, telling councilors that their own homes had been infested with mice they believed spread from Gwin's property.

Carmen Ott who lives on Washington Avenue near Birch, said she has lived with the situation since 2013.

"We are thrilled to death with this," Ott said on Monday morning as workers filled multiple dumpsters with debris and began tearing down the house. "We've had to live with this garbage."

"We've seen it all," Ott said. Ralph Grimmer, who lives on Washington across from the Gwin home, was also



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

A worker loads debris into a dumpster at 1975 Birch St. on Monday, Aug. 8, 2022.

happy about the work.

Angie Stewart, who headed the neighborhood watch program in the area, said she is ambivalent after six years of having to deal with the property.

"You don't want to celebrate the fact they're doing this but six years is a lot," Stewart said.

Stewart, who with her husband, John, lives at the corner of Plum Street and Washington Avenue, just west of Gwin's house, said earlier this year that the recurrent accumulations of trash, and associated problems, have left them and some of their neighbors as "basically hostages to the inside of our homes."

Angie Stewart said un-

pleasant odors emanate from Gwin's property, and she has seen people urinating in the yard.

"We can't go out and use our decks and backyards in the summer," Stewart said. "It's just awful."

She said the local neighborhood watch, which includes 42 homes in the area, was started due to conditions at the Gwin property.

She said homeless people have stayed on the property at times.

"He's had every opportunity to become a good neighbor," Stewart said of Gwin.

Like Ott, Stewart said she's relieved that the house will be gone, but said that dismantling it was necessary.

Water

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straight days and topped 100 on the last three days of July, the city was using about 5.7 million gallons per day.

The city was still diverting about 5 million gallons per day from streams and springs in its watershed on the east slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains west of town.

But Owen said the city has also started to use a very small amount of water from Goodrich Reservoir, the alpine reservoir at the base of Elkhorn Peak that holds about 200 million gallons of water. Goodrich filled this spring. "We haven't had to tap into Goodrich, which is really incredible, again because of the wet spring we had, it kept the

creeks flowing," Owen said. Last summer, by contrast, the springs and streams produced less water, forcing the city to use more water from Goodrich.

The city has been using water recently from Marble Springs, Salmon Creek, and Mill and Little Mill creeks, Owen said.

"We're trying to spread the wealth, if you will. We're not drawing everything from Elk Creek, we're not drawing everything from Salmon Creek. We're kind of taking bits and pieces across the mountain," Owen said.

The city's second supplementary water source, in addition to Goodrich, is a well. (A second well, which was drilled in the fall of 2020, should be available later this year.)

Owen said the city has used small amounts of well water during the recent hot weather.

The city's existing well, which was drilled in the late 1970s, is augmented by water from the watershed. During the winter and early spring, the city diverts tens of millions of gallons of water from the watershed into the well, a process known as Aquifer Storage and Recovery. In 2009 Baker City was the first Oregon city to receive a state permit to use that tactic.

"The mountain is producing well for us. That's great, we like the gravity water whenever we can get it," Owen said.

She was referring to the watershed, which, because it's at a higher elevation than the city, supplies water through gravity, with no pumping needed.

Although the city has not enacted stage 2 of the water curtailment ordinance, Owen urges residents to be careful with their water use — watering gardens and lawns during the evening and early morning, for instance, and making sure sprinklers aren't wasting water on streets or sidewalks.

Owen said the city might be able to get through the summer without moving to stage 2 of the water curtailment ordinance, depending on the weather.

"Our supply is doing as well or better than I had anticipated," she said.

The high use levels that led to the city enacting phase 2 of the water curtailment ordinance in early July 2021 also prompted Owen to talk about the possibility of the city moving to phase 3 for the first time

ever. Under that stage, all outdoor watering with city water is banned.

But the city's water use

dropped by 23% in August 2021 compared with July, and the city never advanced to stage 3.

May we take this method of thanking our neighbors for their many kind expressions of sympathy in our bereavement. Words cannot express our gratitude, and these expressions have been deeply appreciated.

Thank you,
The family of
Gerald Goodwin