



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

Maverik Inc. wants to build its second Baker City gas station and convenience store on this property just southeast of the freeway overpass at exit 302 in north Baker City.

Maverik

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The proposed new site is more convenient for travelers on I-84. Younger said she expects the new location to open in 2024.

The Campbell Street store is Maverik's only one in Oregon. The company, based in Salt Lake City, operates more than 320 stores in 12 western states and has more than

4,800 employees.

The proposed new Baker City location would employ 15 to 18 people, according to Maverik's application.

The Baker County Planning Commission has scheduled a public hearing for Sept. 6 at 5 p.m. at the Courthouse, 1995 Third St., to review Maverik's site plan review request for its new station.

The proposed business would be open 24 hours a

day, seven days a week. It would be somewhat bigger than the Campbell Street station, with a convenience store of almost 6,000 square feet, compared with the current store's 4,200 square feet.

The new location would have 12 fueling pumps, compared with eight on Campbell Street.

The new store would have an outdoor seating patio on the east side of the building.

The property is in the commercial-general zone. Although the parcel is within the Baker City urban growth boundary, under an agreement between the city and Baker County, the county planning commission makes land-use decisions for portions of the urban growth boundary outside the city limits.

Those decisions are based on the city's development code.

Archery

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Agency officials cited multiple reasons for the proposal, including a growing number of archery hunters over the past few decades, and a higher success rate among hunters due to better bows and arrows that make it possible for archers to make lethal shots from longer distances.

ODFW said the number of archers hunting elk in Eastern Oregon rose from about 12,300 in 1995 to about 18,500 in 2019.

Because the archery seasons remained general hunts, with no limits on how many tags were sold, ODFW's lone tool to limit hunting and maintain deer and elk herds with sustainable numbers has been to cut tags for rifle hunts, which are controlled hunts with limited tags awarded through the lottery system.

In choosing which units to change from a general to a controlled archery season, ODFW officials considered the current elk populations in those units, as well as hunter density and hunter displacement, which are based on a public survey of hunters done in 2020.

In some units the ratio of bulls to cows is below the state's goals, and in other units the bull elk harvest is near what biologists consider the unit's capacity. In some units, archery hunters have been taking as many or more branch-antlered bulls than rifle hunters have, according to ODFW.

Although the agency initially planned to change both elk and deer hunts to controlled seasons in 2021, the commission ended up making the shift for deer hunting

Fire, other restrictions in effect

The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, the two federal agencies that manage most of the public land in Northeastern Oregon, have each issued press releases urging hunters and others to be responsible during the late summer and fall. The Vale District of the BLM emphasized fire safety, as well as the potential hazards left by past blazes.

"Recreating responsibly ensures that all visitors to the forest have a good experience," said Brian Anderson, Wallowa Mountains district ranger on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. "Picking up your trash, adhering to stay limits, and not storing or caching items on public lands are keystones of responsible recreation."

Anderson said that when visitors build structures, cache items, leave trash or occupy campsites longer than 14 consecutive days, which is the limit, they can affect other users. Forest Service employees and law enforcement are extracting and impounding caches and camps that are known to be in violation of the caching and stay limits. Illegally built structures will also be being removed.

Visitors are reminded that the following are prohibited:

- Caching personal property for a duration more than 72 hours within designated wilderness.
- Camping/leaving camp equipment for a duration that exceeds the 14-day stay limit. Building structures such as shelters, tables, toilets, etc.
- Cutting or damaging standing live trees.
- Leaving campsites in an unsanitary condition by leaving trash or human waste.

Fire danger is high or extreme across Northeastern Oregon, and on national forests, campfires are allowed only in designated campgrounds and in parts of the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

Campfires are prohibited on all public land managed by the BLM.

A list of restrictions on BLM, national forest and private lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry is available at <http://bmidc.org/restrictions.shtml>.

only starting with the 2021 season.

The switch to mostly controlled archery hunts for elk was delayed until 2022.

The change to controlled archery hunts, for deer and elk, has been controversial.

Bob Reedy, a Baker City bowhunter who also owns an archery shop, said he thinks the changes will result in confusion among hunters, and potentially discourage some longtime hunters from continuing their hobby.

Reedy argues that if ODFW wants to bolster bull

elk numbers, then the agency should either temporarily ban hunters from killing bulls, or change the bag limit to branch-antlered bulls only.

The bag limit for many units in Northeastern Oregon for this year's elk archery hunt is one bull elk. The traditional bag limit for archery hunting — any elk — remains in some units.

Reedy said he's also concerned that the changes will contribute to animosity between archery and rifle hunters.

"We're all hunters," Reedy said.

Elks Lodge cancels hide collection this year

The Baker Elks Lodge will not be collecting deer and elk hides this fall due to the high cost of fuel.

The lodge in past years has set out barrels where hunters can place hides. The Elks sell the hides and donate the proceeds to a variety of aid programs for veterans.

More tags than applicants in many units

Although the shift from general to controlled hunts means some hunters who are accustomed to being able to hunt every year might not draw a tag through the lottery, ODFW has set tag allocations for most units at levels similar to the number of people who actually hunted during recent general seasons.

However, in some popular units the number of controlled hunt tags is well below the number of hunters in recent years.

For this year's archery deer season — the bag limit is one buck with a visible antler — the number of tags in most units is well above the number of first-choice applications for 2021, the first year with controlled archery hunts.

Examples include:

- Imnaha unit — 308 tags in 2022, 77 first-choice applicants in 2021
- Sled Springs unit — 193 and 87
- Keating unit — 275 and 99
- Starkey unit — 770 and 107
- Catherine Creek unit — 495 and 101

Cannon

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The motion to give Cannon a pay raise was done in open public session, as the law requires.

Cannon's contract states that if city councilors rate his performance as satisfactory or better, he is eligible for a minimum 2% merit increase in annual salary.

But Cannon suggested a smaller raise, of 1.7%, to match the average of the pay raises for employees in the city's three labor unions. Councilors voted 6-0 to approve the salary increase. Councilor Kenyon Damschen abstained, since he missed a majority of the executive session.

Residents disappointed about lack of paving

Chuck Peterson, treasurer of the Sally's Addition Homeowners Association, in the southwest corner of the city above the intersection of Indiana Avenue and Reservoir Road, told councilors he was disappointed that they had removed \$50,000 from this year's budget to pave a 480-foot gravel section of Indiana Avenue that accesses the subdivision.

Peterson and Gary McManus, president of the homeowners association, both talked with the council.

Peterson said that when the city excavated a section of Indiana Avenue to install a new water pipe, residents had asked the city to return the street to its former condition.

During its June 14 meeting, the city council voted 3-2 to add to the bud-

get \$50,000, which had previously been withdrawn, to pave that section of street.

But on June 28, in the motion adopting the city's budget for the fiscal year that started July 1, Councilor Jason Spriet proposed to divert the \$50,000 to a chip sealing project elsewhere.

That motion passed 5-0. Mayor Kerry McQuisten was absent, and Damschen, who owns property in the subdivision accessed by that section of Indiana Avenue, abstained.

Peterson told councilors Tuesday that he was puzzled that councilors made that change without notifying him and other residents in the area.

"What bothers me is neither Gary nor I were invited to come to those discussions," Peterson said. "If you're going to vote to do something that drastic, you should hear both sides."

McQuisten said she fully supports paving that section of Indiana, and she asked city staff to add the matter to the agenda for the Sept. 13 meeting.

Resident criticizes mayor

Debbie Henshaw, who is a member of Baker County United, denounced what she termed "untruths" that McQuisten has made about the nonprofit organization formed in 2021.

"Baker County United picked up where the mayor left off in protecting our community against the mandates of Kate Brown, and our mayor, who is supposed to represent the people, went on attack," Henshaw said. "I find that rather odd."

The mission statement of BCU is "to ed-

ucate and build a Baker County network of citizens who actively pursue self-governance by championing our inalienable God given rights, AND to regain and maintain a local representative government that protects the same, guided by our Constitution and the Bill of Rights, with emphasis on our county's culture, history, heritage, AND restore a self-sustaining economy," Henshaw said.

She said BCU is not responsible for a campaign to potentially recall city councilors, an effort started by former Baker City firefighter Casey Husk.

"Baker County United will certainly support him and get signatures because some of you gotta go," Henshaw told councilors.

"Baker County United is not what the mayor paints us as, yet she has never honored any of our invitations to meet," Henshaw said. "Once again, I reach out to invite you to our community barbecue that we are having this Saturday at 5 o'clock at the park."

In other business Tuesday, councilors:

- voted unanimously to authorize the city to sell ambulances and other related equipment. The city will cease operating ambulances on Sept. 30. Baker County has hired Metro West, a private ambulance company, to replace the fire department as ambulance provider for the city and much of Baker County.
- voted unanimously to support efforts to restore passenger train service to Northeastern Oregon.
- voted unanimously to appoint Gratton Miller to the planning commission.

Housing

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The report indicates Baker County not only needs more affordable housing, but a more comprehensive system to help people with behavioral health conditions move into this housing, she said.

Walsh met with members of the housing task force on Aug. 18 to finalize the report, which OHA had awarded New Directions \$44,000 last year to complete.

Farallon Consulting also assisted with the survey.

The task force received roughly 250 survey responses that provided information about specific needs. Two types of housing — transitional, or shelters that bridge the gap between homelessness and stable housing, and supportive, living situations that provide financial and health services — were identified as gaps for people with behavioral health conditions.

"From the very beginning we said, 'We want this to be data-driven,'" Walsh said. "We want our community to have the actual numbers of what the needs are."

These initial survey results led Walsh to apply for an OHA grant in June, which the agency awarded at an amount of \$1.4 million.

Walsh said New Directions plans to use the money to buy a modular home, two homes in the community for people in need, and to set up a drop-in service center — actions that directly address a lack of transitional and supportive housing.

"For folks that need help navigating the housing system, we will have a place where they can go and meet with staff to help them with the process of getting into transitional housing and then stable housing," Walsh said.

She said the housing application process can be a barrier to those with behavioral health issues.

"It can be a very hard time navigating the system," Walsh said. "People don't have the resources to complete five different applications."

About 72% of people with a behavioral health condition who answered the Baker County survey this spring said they had experienced homelessness in the past five years or were currently homeless. Additionally, 27% of people said they didn't feel safe in their current living situation.

According to the report, in response to the survey, one individual commented:

"There is no affordable medium income housing available. ... same as the previous five years of this question are being asked and still nothing being done. ... vouchers only work if there are houses, apartments, duplexes, studios available and built.

"The housing crisis is in all of Oregon, not just Western Oregon."

The survey found that only 20% of housing vouchers issued to Baker County residents for Section 8 housing from July 2021 to June 2022 were actually used.

Data from Oregon Housing Alliance shows that for every 100 families with "extremely low income," just 37 units of housing are available, and over 60% of that group spends more than half of their income on rent.

The report estimates that Baker County needs 256 more units of affordable housing to meet the need.

The survey states that: "Consumer groups and survey respondents have indicated rental properties are not readily available, yet are in high demand, property owners have converted rental homes to temporary vacation rentals, and homes are selling for twice the value of 2 years ago. Comments from individuals who completed the survey indicate this is an ongoing issue in Baker County."

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature appropriated \$130 million to support community investments that ensure people with behavioral health conditions have access to adequate housing and service.

Walsh said other counties in Oregon submitted similar reports to OHA, and that she communicated with other communities during the process at OHA "office hours" meetings.

Walsh said OHA recently invited members from the task force to present the report's findings to state officials in Salem.

"I'm still a little shocked, to us, it's huge," she said. "I just feel it's an honor that Baker County gets to have a voice and we get to share what our needs are."

The task force that helped complete the survey and the final report, consisted of people with lived experiences of behavior health conditions and representatives from groups that provide behavioral health services, including Baker County commissioners, city council members, the Baker County Sheriff's office and city police department personnel, Baker County Veterans Services, Baker School District 5J, Baker County Health Services, Safe Families Baker County, Baker County Safe Families Coalition, Community Connection, the Northeast Oregon Housing Authority, and multiple landlords.

Recall

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Baker City has continued to staff an ambulance, but it is called out only when Metro West's ambulance is already on a call.

The city will cease ambulance service Sept. 30.

The city is also reducing its fire department staffing from 16.25 full-time equivalents during the fiscal year that ended June 30, to 10.5 for the current fiscal year.

Husk contends that Cannon deserves to be fired for what he has described as the "destruction of the fire department."

Husk disputes Cannon's contention that the city couldn't afford to continue operating ambulances.

"Fundamentally, the reason why I'm here is because I believe a wrong was done to our community," Husk said during the July 14 meeting.

Although Husk contends Cannon "misled and manipulated" city councilors, voters don't have any direct say in who serves as city manager.

Only the seven city councilors, per the city charter, have the authority to hire, or fire, a city manager.

According to Oregon law, elected officials can be recalled only after they've served at least six months. One of the seven councilors, Kenyon Damschen, was appointed in March 2022 and won't reach the six-month threshold until Sept. 22.

Based on the timelines under Oregon election law regarding recalls, however, and on Husk's progress, it's almost certain that a recall election, if it happened, wouldn't be scheduled before Sept. 22.

The six other councilors have been in office for at least

six months.

Three of the six — Joanna Dixon, Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Dean Guyer — are serving terms that end Dec. 31, 2022. Waggoner and Guyer plan to seek reelection in the Nov. 8 election, as does Damschen.

The three other councilors — Kerry McQuisten, Shane Alderson and Jason Spriet — are serving terms that continue through the end of 2024. All three were elected to four-year terms in November 2020.

Husk said on Friday, Aug. 19 that he hopes to have recall petitions ready soon so he and others can try to gather the signatures required.

He would need 680 verified signatures from city residents who are registered voters for each councilor. A separate petition with at least that many signatures would be required for each councilor, although voters could sign multiple petitions.

Husk said that in addition to his work obligations in Hermiston, he has to set up a finance committee and bank account for the recall, as Oregon law requires.

If Husk can gather sufficient signatures, within five days of the petition being approved, the affected councilors could either choose to resign or file a written statement, of 200 words or less, explaining why they choose not to resign.

For councilors who don't resign, a recall election must be scheduled within 35 days.

Recall ballots would include both Husk's written statement for why he believes the councilor should be recalled, and the councilor's written response.

Husk encourages people interested in helping with the recall effort to call him at 541-350-0325.