

# 2 years later, Taste of Baker makes a triumphant return

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One of Baker City's favorite events returned this year after a two-year hiatus: Taste of Baker.

Main Street downtown was bustling with people lining up to sample the tasty wares from a variety of restaurants on the sunny and unseasonably balmy Saturday afternoon of Oct. 8.

Some lines even overlapped, such as the lines for Mulan Garden Restaurant and AJ's Corner Brick.

The Main Event was not shy of long lines, either.

It was a welcome sight to residents, visitors, and members of Baker City Downtown (BCD), which organized the showcase of local food options.

"I think it was a great event. It was great to see a lot of people out again on the streets, milling around, and eating good food," said Jenny Mowe, a former BCD board member who is in charge of the organization's promotions committee.

Mowe has received a lot of great feedback from businesses and participants.

She said they are still looking at token sales but they are seeing high numbers, possibly the highest on record.

"I'm really happy that the BCD board stepped up and helped us run it and get everything organized and get sponsors this year," Mowe said.

She thanked the sponsors for making the event happen again, after it was canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

Mowe said she was also grateful to the businesses that helped get the word out and get a menu together.



Ideal weather helped attract people to the Taste of Baker event on Saturday, Oct. 8, 2022.



Downtown Baker City was bustling on Saturday, Oct. 8, 2022, as the Taste of Baker returned after a two-year hiatus.

"I think everybody wanted to see it come back," she said. Demand was so high that some vendors ran out of cer-

tain items quickly.

Live music by Chris Johnson and Nancy Ames added to the festive atmosphere on

*"It was great to see a lot of people out again on the streets, milling around, and eating good food."*

— Jenny Mowe, a former Baker City Downtown board member

Main Street, which was closed to traffic during the two-hour event to make it easier for people to get from side to side and to mingle.

"I've always really loved this event and would hate to see it ever not happen," Mowe said. "It killed us to not have it the last two years, but it's back now and it's such a great event."

*"The people have the right to petition their government for a redress of their grievances."*

— Debbie Henshaw, Baker City resident who supports a recall

## Recall

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The plaintiffs are represented by attorney Vance Day.

According to the lawsuit, the false statement in the recall petition is the same in the petitions for McQuisten, Dixon and Waggoner.

The petitions each state that the councilor in question "has directly sanctioned the dissolution of the professional fire department in Baker City, destroying the network of public safety that has been in place for more than 100 years."

Husk said in a phone interview on Monday, Oct. 10 that he had not yet been served with the lawsuit.

He said he stands by the statement in the petitions about the councilors.

"Fundamentally I think that's true," Husk said.

He said he considers the lawsuit "bogus" and a case of the plaintiffs' trying to "intimidate and bully" him.

"To me it's another example of why they're unfit for the office they hold," Husk said.

He said he believes he will prevail in the lawsuit.

Husk said the campaign to collect signatures to force a recall election has been going well.

"The response from the public has been positive so far," he said.

Each of the plaintiffs also alleges that Henshaw made a statement to a person who asked for information about the recall. The statement attributed to Henshaw: "Thank you for the curiosity. In a tiny nutshell, our city council and mayor allowed our city manager to dissolve our city ran gold-standard fire department and ambulance service. We no longer have enough firefighters on shift to enter a burning building, and instead of the excellently dually trained EMT/Firefighters, we now have an ambulance service who's (sic) staff rotates out. ..."

Henshaw, like Husk, said her statement is, in her view, true.

"There are no lies in that I can see," Henshaw said.

She said the statement is one she posted on a Facebook page in response to a question about what had prompted the recall campaign.

Henshaw said the lawsuit is "immature and childish," and she vowed to continue to help Husk gather signatures.

"I will continue to stand up for what's right for the citizens of this city," she said.

Henshaw said she's concerned that the lawsuit could discourage people from signing the petitions.

Henshaw said she considers this a First Amendment issue.

"The people have the right to petition their government for a redress of their grievances," she said.

Husk started the recall effort this summer, not long after he resigned as a city firefighter and took a job as a firefighter in Umatilla County.

To force a recall election, he would need to collect at least 680 signatures from registered voters who live in the city. There is a separate petition for each councilor, but voters can sign multiple petitions.

None of the three councilors who filed the complaint against Husk and Henshaw will definitely be in office beyond Dec. 31, 2022, regardless of a recall.

Dixon and Waggoner are serving terms that end that day. Waggoner is seeking reelection in the Nov. 8 election; Dixon is not.

McQuisten is leaving her position in late November because she is moving outside the city limits and as a result will no longer be eligible, per the city charter, to serve on the council.

Husk was motivated, both in changing jobs and in pursuing the recall, by the city council's decision to have the fire department cease operating ambulances after Sept. 30 of this year.

City Manager Jonathan Cannon told councilors in late March that he believes the city can't afford to continue to operate ambulances because the cost to do so is exceeding the revenue the city receives from ambulance billing.

Baker County commissioners, who by state law are responsible for ensuring ambulance coverage, including in Baker City, in early June hired Metro West, a private ambulance provider.

The company has been responding to ambulance calls since early June.



Dixon



McQuisten



Waggoner

Husk

## Fire

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An MD-87 jet air tanker dropped retardant on the fire, and two helicopters dropped water. Aircraft costs for even a one-day fire can run into the tens of thousands of dollars.

The fire didn't damage any structures, and there were no evacuations.

Meyer said two or three engines patrolled the fire during the day over the weekend.

"There is still some heat in some of the heavier pockets of fuels," he said. Some of those pockets are inside control lines, and with warm, dry weather forecast to continue all week, Meyer said it's possible the fire could produce small amounts of smoke.

He also noted that although nights are chillier than during the summer, and the period of peak sunlight a couple hours shorter, the fire risk remains.

"Fuels are still extremely dry out there," Meyer said. "Just because it gets cold at night doesn't mean there's not a risk of fire. We just haven't gotten that good shot of rain to moderate things."

## Store

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Stauffer said People Helping People works with a variety of community organizations.

"We help with the (Housing and Urban Development), we help with the jails, we help with the corrections, we do community service, we have volunteers and we also work with Shelter from the Storm, DHS, churches, care organizations," she said.

"We work with veterans, homeless people, recovery employment opportunities, local businesses, Community Connection and Eastern Oregon University and we also work with the DHS and the CHD and the care programs."

The Baker City store's inventory includes a variety of clothing, furniture and jewelry.

Stauffer and her staff are still setting up for receiving donations and will an-



Rows and rows of clothing racks offer a variety of choices at the People Helping People thrift store, now open at 2017 Main St. in Baker City.

nounce when they're ready to handle donors.

"The most interesting donation is someone's false teeth," she said.

Stauffer says her faith was a driving factor in establishing thrift stores in the area, fostering community wherever she feels needed, and though she

didn't have a handy count of how many attended the opening day, she says it was a positive experience and counted each one as a blessing.

"We all just enjoyed every moment of it," she said.

The shop will be open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

## McCarty

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McCarty, 56, was arrested at his Ben Dier Lane home, near Pine Creek, on Sept. 26. He was released from the Baker County Jail after posting 10% of the \$25,000 bail.

McCarty is scheduled to enter a plea on Nov. 8 at 1:45 p.m. in Baker County Circuit Court.

The Baker County grand jury issued a secret indictment on Sept. 22 charging McCarty with one count each of aggravated first-degree theft, first-degree criminal trespassing and second-degree theft.

In a brief filed Oct. 4, Baker County District Attorney Greg Baxter outlines the sequence of events that led to the indictment and McCarty's subsequent arrest.

Baxter filed the brief with Baker County Circuit Court Judge Matt Shirtcliff in support of Baxter's proposal that McCarty, as a condition of his release, not be allowed to come within 50 feet of the cabin.

The Sanderses bought the property, including the cabin, in December 2002. The couple have made annual property tax payments since then, according to assessor's office records.

In 2016, Brad Royal, who owned the parcel just west of the Sanders property before

## McCarty challenges county's road legalization resolution

David McCarty's attorney has filed a petition seeking a judicial review of Baker County's resolution designating as public a segment of the Pine Creek Road that runs across his property.

County commissioners approved that resolution Aug. 17.

Its purpose is to ensure the public can travel on the road through the property McCarty bought in September 2020.

Soon after buying the land, McCarty installed a locked gate at the eastern end of his property. Joelleen Linstrom, who lives with McCarty, said he allowed people who called a phone number posted on the gate to walk or ride horses on the road.

In a separate legal action, the lawsuit McCarty filed against the county in April 2021 is still active. McCarty is asking for either a declaration that the disputed section of the Pine Creek Road crossing his property is not a public right-of-way, or, if a jury concludes there is legal public access, that the limits of that access be defined and that the county pay him \$730,000 to compensate for the lost value of the land based on the legal public access and for other costs he has incurred as a result of the

selling it to McCarty in October 2021, had an attorney send a letter to the couple claiming that an extension of the porch on the Sanders cabin had encroached on his property.

The property owners didn't settle the matter, according to Baxter's brief, but he contends that the episode demonstrates that Royal "knew that the cabin was on Sanders' property" but that an extension of

the porch might have crossed the property boundary.

Baxter writes in his brief that the deed and other documents filed when McCarty bought the property from Royal last year have "no mention of a cabin, or any other structure," on the parcel that McCarty bought.

In the spring of 2022, James Sanders visited his cabin and found that the lock on the

front door had been cut, according to Baxter's brief. Sanders also found a sign stating: "No Trespassing — McCarty." Sanders called the Baker County Sheriff's Office, and Deputy Chad Mills investigated.

According to Baxter's brief, in a recorded phone call on June 3, McCarty told Mills that he "had the property surveyed and that the cabin is on

his property."

According to the brief, McCarty told Mills he didn't recall what company had surveyed the property.

Three days later, on June 6, 2022, Mills met with McCarty and again asked about the surveyor. This time, according to Mills' report, McCarty declined to name the surveyor.

In his brief, Baxter writes that Baker County Assessor Kerry Savage and Shawn Berry, who works in the assessor's office, confirmed that the line between the Sanders and McCarty properties "has not been recently surveyed and that the property where the cabin is located (tax lot 600) is still owned by the Sanders."

McCarty's attorney, Kyra Rohner of Baker City, filed a memorandum on Oct. 5 contesting Baxter's request that McCarty be restricted from coming within 50 feet of the cabin.

In her memo, Rohner notes that the Sanderses, along with another couple who own property along Pine Creek, Tom and Betty Ann Lager, filed a civil suit against McCarty in July 2022. The two couples contend McCarty has deprived them of the use of their properties by installing a locked gate on the Pine Creek Road. The lawsuit also mentions that McCarty removed the lock on the Sanders cabin

and replaced it with one of his own.

Rohner writes that McCarty "continues to assert his legal right to the cabin."

She wrote that James Sanders has acknowledged "he did not know where the property boundaries are between his lot and McCarty's."

Rohner cites, as evidence supporting McCarty's claim that the cabin is on his property, two maps, both overlaid on aerial photos, one from Anderson Perry and Associates and another from a cell-phone mapping app. The two maps show the cabin, or at least most of it, being on McCarty's property.

Rohner also writes that "Mr. Sanders acted in a manner consistent with not having ownership rights in the cabin when he contacted law enforcement to retrieve his personal property from the cabin."

Baxter's brief has a different explanation, one that doesn't imply that the Sanderses aren't confident they own the cabin.

Baxter wrote that the couple "know that if they attempt to take back physical possession of the cabin on their own, then there will likely be a confrontation. Instead, they contacted law enforcement with the hope that the criminal justice system would be able to hold the Defendant accountable."