

Elliott Forest sale moves ahead over Gov. Brown's objection

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau



SALEM — At odds with the governor, the Oregon treasurer and secretary of state voted Tuesday to go ahead with a plan to sell a hotly debated swath of coastal forest to a partnership between a timber company and a Native American tribe — albeit with some changes.

At issue is the sale of an approximately 80,000-acre parcel of the Elliott State Forest in Coos and Douglas counties. Environmental groups have fought for keeping the land in public hands.

The State Land Board — the governor, treasurer and secretary of state — oversees certain state-owned lands. Treasurer Tobias Read and Secretary of State Dennis Richardson endorsed moving forward with the sale over Gov. Kate Brown's objection.

Read proposed an amended version of the original sale protocol that he says includes "enhanced recreation and conservation measures."

Brown, over Richardson's objections, directed the state lands department to come up with a proposal for public ownership of the forest. The department reports to Brown.

Complex issue

The sale of the Elliott is a complex issue, in part because the land in question is essentially a trust — the state must collect money from harvesting timber or other activities for the state's Common School Fund and the land board is the fiduciary of that fund.

In 2015, the land board — then comprised of Brown, then-Treasurer Ted Wheeler and then-Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins, all Democrats — voted to go ahead

with a multistep sale protocol that included an assessment of the land's value and a set of criteria for the sale.

Over a year later, only one group, a timber company out of Roseburg called Lone Rock Resources — in partnership with the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians — submitted a proposal for acquiring the forest. The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians would, under that proposal, hold a conservation easement.

In light of the tribes' involvement, the sale of the Elliott also now raises questions about the government's duty to "right some historic wrongs," in the words of Treasurer Read. Native Americans were systematically removed from their ancestral lands as the United States and Oregon took shape — a truth especially poignant on the state's 158th birthday Tuesday.

Governor's concerns

Brown said the requirements for the sale were too stringent.

The state set the price at \$220.8 million, and required bidders to have detailed plans for employment on the forest and maintaining certain features, such as old forest stands and riparian areas. Several public agencies had

expressed interest in the property, but none ended up submitting an acquisition proposal.

Brown wants not only to keep the land public, but decouple some or all the land from the Common School Fund.

Brown wants to use \$100 million of the state's bonding capacity to purchase especially sensitive habitat areas in the forest, such as steep slopes. She also wants to negotiate a new habitat conservation plan with federal agencies on the rest of the land, while also providing an opportunity for tribes to exercise ownership.

Prior to the vote Tuesday, state Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, suggested using revenue bonds payable from revenues generated by the forest.

Courtney, although he believes the land should stay in public ownership, said he wanted to help the board, regardless of its decision.

Read, the state treasurer, said he was reluctant to sell the forest but felt that the state had to meet its fiduciary responsibilities first.

"I think it is the best and most realistic proposal we have in front of us," Read said of the protocol, before proposing some changes.

Read's amendments

The amendments Read proposed include: allowing the state to buy back up to \$25 million worth of acreage in high-value areas; having the department's negotiations include certain conservation principles; clarifying plans to protect old forest stands; and include a right of first refusal for the five federally recognized Native American tribes in western Oregon, should any part of the land be put up for sale again after it is sold to the LLC proposed by the Cow Creek Band and Lone Rock.



Officer Teresa McKee (right) shakes Warrenton Mayor Mark Kujala's hand after taking the oath of office at Tuesday's City Commission meeting. Deputy City Recorder Dawne Shaw watches in the background.

Warrenton Police gain new officer, sergeant

Veteran officers improve force

By **ERICK BENDEL**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Warrenton Police Department has a new officer and a new sergeant.

Police Chief Mathew Workman announced the hiring of Officer Teresa McKee, a former firefighter EMT and Arizona state trooper, at Tuesday's City Commission meeting, where McKee took the oath of office.

McKee speaks Spanish, worked as a paramedic and is a drug recognition expert.

Officer Jim Pierce has been promoted to sergeant, a position called for in this fiscal year's budget.

Pierce is coming full-circle: He was promoted to sergeant at the Warrenton Police Department in July 1988 before joining Oregon State Police.

Both McKee and Pierce tried out retirement before realizing they "couldn't take it any-



Officer Jim Pierce, recently promoted to sergeant in the Warrenton Police Department, takes a knee as his wife, Debbie, and grandson, Alex Johnson, 4, pin a new badge to Pierce's uniform.

more," Workman said. McKee has worked as a reserve officer for the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office, while Pierce has served as a reserve officer for the Astoria Police Department.

In other business, the City Commission:

- Adopted goals for the next fiscal year.

The goals include establishing maintenance programs

for public facilities, boosting emergency preparedness measures, updating the Hammond Marina master plan and continuing urban renewal projects.

- Appointed Dawn DeLacey, an ambassador for the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, to Position No. 7 on the Warrenton Community Library Board.

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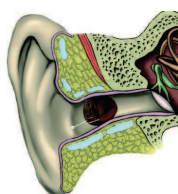
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