

# Housing Authority Update At January General Council Meeting

■ New Elders' Committee members named, some Elders seek gastric bypass surgery.

By Ron Karten

The January General Council meeting was held on Sunday, January 9, at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde. Here are the highlights:

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy called the meeting to order. Tribal Elder Val Grout offered the invocation.

The Elders' Committee finished voting and announced the winners for three committee openings: Tribal Elders Louise Coulson, Tom LaChance and Ruth Rickard.

Tribal Housing Authority Executive Director Carina Kistler Ginter gave detailed information about Housing Authority programs and thanked the personnel who keep the programs going.

## The Housing Authority offers the following home ownership services to Tribal members:

Both HUD- and Tribal-funded down payment assistance grants, coordination and referrals to lenders for Section 184 loans, homeownership counseling, pre-purchase assistance, predatory lending avoidance tips, home inspection advice, down payment assistance grants, debt counseling, foreclosure avoidance, home repair and remodeling programs, property management, housing development, HUD administrative services.

## The Housing Authority has in 2004:

Awarded \$939,972 in Down Payment Assistance (DPA) grants to 80 Tribal members, served Tribal members in 11 states mostly Oregon, Washington, Michigan and California one of four Housing Authority grants were funded by HUD.

## Housing opportunities through the Tribe include:

74 Tribal housing units for Elders and families, 36 homeownership manufactured homes, deferrals to additional housing resources and developments on Tribal-owned lands.

In addition to the Tribe's property in Grand Ronde, the Housing Authority is seeking land owned by Tribal members in the Portland, Salem and Eugene areas for potential cooperative developments, according to Kistler Ginter. Potential joint projects are dependent on the amount of land, its location and other factors, she said. Interested Tribal members should contact the Housing Authority by phone (503-879-2403, 1-800-422-0232 ext. 2403) or email (housing@grandronde.org).

## HUD funding provided:

\$215,513 in administrative costs to operate the Housing Authority in 2004, \$392,285 for 34 Down Payment Assistance grant awards to Tribal members since October, 2003, 43 percent of Housing Authority 2004 staff salaries. This amount will increase to 60 percent in 2005 and include the addition of two new shared staff positions (recreation and crime prevention specialists) anticipated for 2005.

## Tribal Home Repair and Remodeling programs:

Home repair grants, medical adaptation grants, weatherization program, and in 2005, a home improvement pilot program.

## In 2004, the Housing Authority provided:

39 Medical Adaptation Grants totaling \$88,637 (215 awarded in the last nine years), 38 home repair grants totaling \$229,079, 7 weatherization grants totalling \$18,229 (162 grants for both home repair and weatherization in last nine years).

## In 2004, Indian Health Services Sanitation Grants provided:

11 projects totalling \$97,897 to provide water and sewer capabilities (169 grants in last nine years).

## HUD funding for Tribal Housing Development:

Ilip Tilixam, 38 Elder housing rental units: \$3,468,931, Chxi Musam Illihi, 36 family housing rental units: \$5,816,736, housing Authority office building and shop: \$813,513.

## Housing and Development Activities planned for 2005:

Elder foster homes (see photos this issue, page 5), Elder Activity Center, family housing phases II and III (currently in negotiations with architects), Sanitation facility for Tribal housing, planning for market rate Elders' rentals, development plans for non-Grand Ronde areas.

## Housing Goals for 2005:

Eliminate housing development infrastructure barriers, complete architectural design for Elders' activity center, administer Down Payment Assistance, Home Repair, Medical Adaptation, Weatherization and Alternative Housing grants and manage Tribal housing projects, begin infrastructure Family Housing Phase II and III, begin housing construction, begin architectural design for Elders rentals, phase II, investigate housing development opportunities outside the Grand Ronde area, begin planning for local homeownership construction development, continue collaboration with Tribal departments to develop service referrals for housing residents, plan for recreation activities for GRTHA housing project residents.

## Elder Housing Rent and Income Information (Fair Market Rents)

Fair market rents (FMR) published in the Federal Register vary by area 2004 FMR for Polk County is \$671 for a two-bedroom unit (all Elder housing units have two bedrooms), GRTHA uses 80 percent of

FMR for maximum rent determinations maximum rent is calculated using 80 percent FMR minus \$128 utility amount Ilip Tilixam current maximum rent is \$409/month.

## Elder Housing Rent and Income Information (Income Information)

Timber revenue payments are not included in income Elder benefit of \$1,000/month is not included in monthly rent calculation. Per capita payments (\$431.75/month for 2004 (\$5,181), \$480.83/month for 2005 (\$5,770) are included in monthly rent calculation (a HUD requirement).

## Elder Housing Rent and Income Information (Factoids):

No Elders presently pay the maximum rent of \$409. Average rent paid is \$99.00/month. Highest rent paid is \$286.00/month. Lowest rent paid is \$0/month (4 of 37 pay no rent). As of March, 2004, Elder rents were reduced by 33 percent



Housing Authority Executive Director Carina Kistler Ginter

Photo by Ron Karten

(The percent of adjusted income was reduced from 30 percent to 20 percent). Utility allowance of \$128/month is deducted from calculated rent bi-annual rent determinations are based on occupancy date.

Many questions were raised about HUD and NAHASDA regulations. As a result, the Tribe will have a HUD and NAHASDA expert at the March General Council meeting.

Questions also came up about whether the Tribe is required to collect rents, what rent, if any, is appropriate to charge Elders, and whether the Housing Authority employs too many staff members for the job.

"I'm offended that we're making our Elders pay to live on our land," said Tribal member Rod Bly.

The council considers all Tribal members and all Tribal Elders when making decisions like the cost of housing, and that it was not fair to make decisions for Grand Ronde

Tribal Elders without looking at the big picture said Tribal Council member Angie Blackwell. Only 10 percent of Tribal Elders live in Grand Ronde.

"I think our Elders have it better than they've ever had it," said Tribal Elder and former Tribal Council member Val Grout. "People, its got to be fair across the board."

Tribal member Linda Olson advised that county roads running through some of the housing units are not Trust property and as a result, youngsters without driving licenses should be aware that driving on these roads is not legal.

She also suggested the Housing Authority employ a counselor to work with troubled families in Tribal housing. "There are things that go on after hours that concern me," she said, while also indicating that counselors from Social Services may result in more stigma than help.

A question came up about the Tribe helping disabled Veterans. There is no question of the Tribe supporting Veterans said Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker-Robertson.

"We just want to make sure that it doesn't damage their other benefits," she said.

Questions came up about the Tribe funding gastric bypass surgery, sought by a number of Tribal Elders. Two procedures have been approved by council, said Mike Watkins, Health Clinic Director, and 10 others are going through the evaluation process. The clinic is seeking Tribal Council approval to have three more bypasses done this year.

The Tribe works with the Portland Clinic to do the bypass evaluations and operations. The \$20,000-\$40,000 operation has been effective in eliminating diabetes, a major health problem among Tribal members, according to Tribal Elder Patty Tom-Martin, chair of the Health Committee.

Bypasses have been delayed so long that some Tribal Elders approved for the operation are now no longer healthy enough to get it.

The \$50 door prizes went to Tribal Elders Nadine McNutt, Charlotte Gray and Tribal member Lewis Younger, who donated his prize to the local Veterans Association. Tribal member Myriah Shandy won the \$100 prize.

A drawing also was held for free tickets to the U.S. National Figure Skating Championships held in Portland this month. The Spirit Mountain Casino is a major sponsor of the event (See story this issue, page 6).

## Announcements:

The next General Council Meeting will be Sunday, February 6, 2005, at 11 a.m. at the Embassy Suites Hotel at Portland Airport, 7900 N.E. 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Originally scheduled for Eugene, the meeting was changed to accommodate an ATNI meeting in Portland the following day.