

## Tribal Council Hosts HUD Native American Specialist

■ Interim Casino Manager Mike Larsen updates membership on tour buses, new slot machines.

By Ron Karten

The March General Council meeting was held on Sunday, March 6th, at the Community Center in Grand Ronde. Here are the highlights:

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy called the meeting to order. Tribal Elder Janet Phillips offered the invocation.

Tribal Housing Authority Executive Director Carina Kistler Ginter introduced Patricia Boydson, Director of Grants Evaluation for the federal Housing and Urban Development Department's (HUD) Northwest Office of Native American programs in Seattle. Her presentation focused on the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), in response to questions about the program at a previous General Council meeting.

Her presentation covered the history and purpose of the federal legislation that has regulated the funding of Indian housing since 1996. She also covered requirements and opportunities available through the legislation.

NAHASDA replaced the United States Housing Act of 1937 under which, Boydson said, "HUD controlled (housing grants) with an iron fist" and resulted in "funding problems."

Today, by comparison, NAHASDA provides wide-ranging opportunities for Tribes, through their housing authorities, to set their own paths and use the funding available in a great number of ways.

With NAHASDA funding, for example, Tribes can pay not only for administrative costs, but also for crime prevention facilities such as fences, speed bumps, monitors, lighting and locks, as well as security personnel other than police. Self-sufficiency costs also are possible under NAHASDA, including such things as education, child care, transportation and training. Youth activities as well as homelessness and foreclosure prevention also may be addressed with these funds.

Boydson called NAHASDA rules "an opportunity to be creative."

Funding levels are decreasing, however, according to Boydson. From 2004 to 2005, funding levels in the Northwest have decreased from \$53.3 million to \$50.3 million, and in Grand Ronde, from \$3.6 million to \$3.3 million.

"We expect more cuts," she said, "but alternative sources of funding are available," and "we did well considering the cuts nationwide."

Questions focused on using the Tribe's available NAHASDA dollars in different ways.

Tribal member Rod Bly asked how much cash the Tribal Housing Authority has on hand, and how long it has had that money. Housing Authority Director Carina Kistler Ginter said there was "close to \$17 million" in grants going back to some awarded

in 2000. She noted, however, that it will mostly be accounted for as the Housing Authority funds current projects.

Bly also wanted to know how much was available for homeless Tribal members. Following the meeting,

routes to the Spirit Mountain Casino. While they were halted briefly in a reassessment of their costs and benefits, a public outcry convinced management to send the routes out for bid again. They were scheduled to return today, March 15, across a limited area five

days a week, three busses a day. Each bus ride will cost \$5.

"The program needed to be restructured," Larsen said. "We realized when the busses went away that we wanted them back."

He also noted that plans are in the works for adding many new slot machines to the casino. As currently envisioned, the plans will expand the gaming floor into part of the current bingo hall,

with bingo moving to some of the smaller rooms in the casino.

"No one's getting laid off" in the coming changes, Larsen said.

Tribal member Pamela Traum noted that she was unable to receive help from Social Services because she has a child, and is unable to receive help from Vocational Rehabilitation Services because she is not currently using drugs.

give up the right to sell tax-free cigarettes. The Tribe had determined, said Kennedy, that the amount the Tribe would make in this enterprise was about \$300,000.

Betty Bly also asked why the Tribe is charging tax in its gasoline business.

Tribal Attorney Rob Greene said the Tribe is currently negotiating this issue and has found that "the tax is included in the price when we buy the gas."

Monty Parazoo said that the issues of gasoline and cigarette taxes show that "we're not being treated like a sovereign nation and we're not demanding it."

In fact, said Tribal Attorney Rob Greene, the Tribe does not have the full attributes of sovereignty. "We could not form a Grand Ronde Army," he said, but added, "We have taken a very aggressive position in negotiations (over these issues)."

Tribal Elder Charlotte Gray asked about a telephone survey seeking attitudes about the Tribe and the casino. The Tribe is funding that survey, said Chairwoman Kennedy, "to collect and provide this information to the state's decision makers."

The Tribe has signed an agreement for a First Alert system for Tribal Elders; that agreement was in the hands of the vendor at the time of the meeting.

Tribal Elder Linda Olson asked what services the Tribe provided for Tribal members "incarcerated or returned from corrections."

Although there is "not a lot" for those still incarcerated, according to Dave Fullerton, Manager of the Social Services Department, some inmates have had correspondence with members of the Social Services staff. Once an inmate is released, depending on the individual circumstances, the department offers employment and training services and general assistance; the Education Division has some services and funding available; the Health Clinic offers substance abuse services; and Human Resources follows regulations from the Indian Child Welfare Act, but imprisonment will not necessarily rule one out for job consideration.

"It has been a barrier for those convicted of certain kinds of crimes," including crimes of violence against women and children, said Human Resources Manager Judy Zettergren.

"We need a very rounded, holistic program if they are going to succeed," said Tribal member Elaine LaBonte, who has worked with incarcerated women. "It is important for Social Services to work with these people before they get out," she said.

Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr. reported on the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) meeting. Questions of Tribes issuing bonds and retirement issues headed the list. They also discussed off-reservation gaming, the chipping away of Tribal sovereignty rights and Tribal access to Homeland Security funds.

Tribal members may now view approved General Council meeting minutes on the Tribal webpage.

The next Tribal Council General Meeting will be April 3 at 11 a.m. at the Valley River Inn, 1000 Valley River Way, Eugene, Oregon. A map to the facility is on the bottom of page 11. ■



Tribal Housing Authority Executive Director Carina Kistler Ginter

Kistler Ginter corrected her approximation of money available for the homeless to say that \$105,000 has been earmarked from a 2004 Indian Housing Block Grant allocation for rental assistance. Her guestimate during the meeting was \$80,000.

Tribal member Betty Bly, Rod's mom, asked how people apply for the funding available. "Program policies are currently being developed for students and Elders," said Kistler Ginter.

Betty Bly also asked about the purpose of Tribal Housing Authority inspections. "Are inspections just for maintenance or are they seeing if the units are being used properly?"

"The inspectors have many roles," said Boydson, among them making sure that the units are being properly used.

In June, said Boydson, she will be part of a NAHASDA team that visits Grand Ronde to audit the Tribal Housing Authority, but she said this about her first view of the Tribal Housing Authority's work: "It is without a doubt the nicest looking community I've had the opportunity to observe."

Drawings were held: Tribal Elder Pearl Lyon won \$100. Tribal member Sean Beauchamp as well as Cicely Scott and Ashley Heward each won \$50.

In Royalty fund-raising drawings, Tribal members Jessie Brann and Cordelia Kneeland as well as Linda LaChance each won in the 50/50 category, meaning that each shared 50 percent of the amount collected for that drawing with the Royalty Committee. Tribal Elder Betty Bly won a Pendleton blanket in a separate Royalty Committee drawing.

Tribal Elder and Interim Casino Manager Mike Larsen updated the membership on the return of bus



Patricia Boydson, Director of Grants Evaluation for HUD

"I've been clean for three years," she said.

"There's not a program for those who are doing what they are supposed to do," she said.

"The Tribe is not successful as long as Tribal members are in trouble," said Tribal member Michael Bolton.

A discussion about Tribal sovereignty picked up a few times over a few different issues.

Betty Bly asked why the Tribe gave up its right to sell tax-free cigarettes?

The Tribe has studied the issue in consultation with the state, said Tribal Chair Cheryle Kennedy, and agreed to accept a state grant of about \$300,000 annually and in exchange agreed to

Photos by Toby McClary