

New Tribal Council Members Announced

■ Support for the voters' choice is expressed by incoming and outgoing council members.

By Ron Karten

The September General Council meeting was held on Sunday, September 11, at the Tribal Community Center. Here are the highlights:

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

Elections Committee Chairwoman and Tribal Elder Donna Casey announced this year's Tribal Council election winners: Tribal members Reyn Leno (16.34 percent) and Kathleen Tom (11.23 percent) and Tribal Elder Wink Soderberg (10.15 percent).

An automatic recall had been included in the counting process because third and fourth place pollers were within one percent of each other.

Tribal members were each entitled to vote for three candidates, and 3,616 total votes were cast. Of 3,834 eligible voters, 1,163 ballots were returned and 133 voted in person for a total of 1,296 or almost 34 percent of eligible voters voted. Last year, 41 percent of eligible voters voted, and in 2003, 37 percent of eligible voters voted.

Candidates and others accepted the results of the vote with generosity and concern for the well-being of the Tribe.

Outgoing Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker-Robertson said she hopes the membership will give the new Tribal Council members a chance to prove themselves.

"It's difficult to switch from an 8-5 job to one that's 24-7," she said. "Congratulations to Wink and Kathy. I will support you."

"I've always put the membership first," said outgoing councilor June Sell-Sherer. She encouraged new members to avoid "personal agendas."

Fifteen-year Tribal Council member and Tribal Elder Val Grout, who left the council last year, thanked those who supported her unsuccessful bid to return to the council this year, and went on to make some apologies to those she felt she had offended.

She encouraged Tribal members not to vote as a block. "Look into your heart," she said. "Vote from your heart."

She praised Sheker-Robertson for her "integrity and compassion. The well-being of the membership meant more to you than votes," said Grout.

"Good luck to all," she said. "Take care of our Tribe and our families."

"For me," said Tribal Council Vice Chairman Reyn Leno, "it's always been about the whole membership. I've served for nine years and will do it until the membership tells me I'm no longer wanted."

Tribal Elder Betty Bly thanked the membership from her brother, Monty Parazoo, who was unsuccessful in his bid for Tribal Council, and was unable to attend the meeting.

"You don't have to worry about Wink asking questions (from the audience) anymore," said incoming Tribal Council member and Tribal Elder Wink Soderberg. "Thanks to

Casted Votes Of Eligible Voters

2005 — 34 percent
2004 — 41 percent
2003 — 37 percent

those who supported me. To those who didn't — we would never do anything to hurt other Tribal members. Give us a chance. We'll do the best we can. We'll be fair," he said.

"I'll be asking for help from you," said incoming Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom Martin. She was referring not only to Grout, who had offered her advice to any who asked, and to the membership as a whole. "Here's to the new Tribal Council and I hope I don't let any of you down," she said.

Tribal Council member Angie Blackwell congratulated all who had participated.

Tribal Council member and Tribal Elder Westley West offered congratulations and added, "You have to understand that we are all human and we'll disagree. That's natural."

"Thanks to June and Val," said Tribal member Elaine LaBonte. "It's not going to be the same without them." She added a special thanks to Sheker-Robertson.

The "Fee" to "Trust" Process

Lands Coordinator Mike Wilson described the process of moving lands from "fee" status to "Trust" status. When successful, the process means that the land is removed from state and local government regulations and taxes.

"In the allotment period," said Wilson, "a lot of land was lost for not paying back taxes."

The 12-24 month process starts with a Tribal Council resolution, and follows with a range of studies, including environmental and endangered species assessments.

Because the change removes the land from county regulations and taxes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs submits the proposed change to the local county commission for its approval. And if the county commission expresses concerns about traffic, for example, or another issue, the Tribe has always worked with the county until the issues are resolved, said Wilson.

Wilson encouraged the membership to contact county commissioners in office and during election time to find out where they stand on the process.

Because many — locally and across the country — oppose "Trust" status, the Tribe is "vigilant" for new laws that attempt to make changes in the process, said Tribal Chairwoman Cheryl Kennedy.

"There's an on-going attempt to diminish Tribal sovereignty," she said.

At the same time, said Wilson, federal rules for turning "fee" land into "Trust" land have been getting stricter. Not so long ago, it was enough to say that the Tribe needed the land for "self-sufficiency," but

2005 Tribal Council Election Results

	votes
Reynold L. Leno.....	591
Kathleen Tom.....	406
Wink Soderberg.....	367
Valorie Sheker-Robertson.....	353
Leroy "Buzz" Simmons.....	350
Robert D. Haller.....	290
June Sell-Sherer.....	287
Ed Larsen.....	239
Michael J. Larsen.....	230
Val Grout.....	227
Janet Phillips.....	110
Monty Parazoo.....	90
Bernadine Shriver.....	76

today, the Tribe needs to be more specific and "look further out" to what the Tribe intends to do with the land. Today, many of the explanations to the Bureau of Indian Affairs include such needs as housing and economic development. And in the future, Wilson said, the explanations required may be more specific still.

As a result of successful changes, the Tribe has been able to take land zoned for housing only on 10 acres or more and bring in high density housing for Tribal members and Elders. The process also enabled the Tribe to take land zoned for farming and build the casino on the site.

Currently, the Tribe holds 1,500 acres in "fee" status and 600 acres in "Trust" status, said Wilson.

Other Issues

Tribal Elder Betty Bly asked about the new Enrollment/Ad Hoc Committee — including the names of the members of the committee, have they started meeting yet, and whether Tribal members are entitled to sit in on meetings.

Ken Trevino, Chairman of the committee, said that the first meeting had been held the Thursday before to elect officers and that the first official meeting would be September 25. The Tribal community is entitled to attend, he said, but only for listening purposes.

Bly also said that a tire on her car had been slashed and she believed it was related to her participation in the Grand Ronde "grass roots"

website.

"Evidently, I don't have freedom of speech," she said.

Chairwoman Kennedy assigned General Manager Cliff Adams to look into the incident. It had not been reported to police.

Elaine LaBonte asked when the membership would see results of program evaluations. Adams said that the process was continuing and not yet ready for dissemination. When the process was complete, some parts would remain confidential, said Adams. LaBonte noted that "we can't comment on the budget until we know how efficient the programs are" and she encouraged the Tribal Council to consider that when deciding what information to release from these evaluations.

Because of federal HIPPA regulations, said Wellness Center Director Patty Tom Martin, this program is still seeking authority to release the information.

Tribal member Michael Bolton reported that his sister, Tribal member Lila Musso, is in Oregon Health Sciences University with a serious illness and would appreciate visits from Tribal members. She has been hospitalized since August 15, he said.

Drawings were held: Jackie Brann along with Tribal Elders Sylvia Fuller and LeVeta Sell-Haller each won \$50. Tribal Elder Gary LaChance won \$100.

The next General Council meeting is scheduled for October 9, 11 a.m., at the Community Center. ■