

Rousing Housing Review

■ Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority called "an exceptionally well-run program."

By Ron Karten

"An exceptionally well-run program, staffed by highly qualified personnel." That's the bottom line assessment of the Tribe's Housing Authority by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The review, the first that HUD has performed at Grand Ronde, covers the period from the first HUD allocations in the mid-1990s, with a focus on the period since 1998 when the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority (GRTHA) issued its first 5-year plan. In these years, HUD's Office of Native American Programs has provided more than \$25 million to GRTHA for low-income housing and the variety of projects also necessary for development — roads, landscaping, piping for water and treatment for sewers, and even staff salaries — all required when new housing goes up.

This \$25 million has funded, for example, the Elders rentals, the family rentals and family housing including 54 low income units and 18 market rate units now under construction. It will also pay for two of three Elder foster homes now under construction. It paid for the Housing Authority office and shop, the wetlands mitigation project on the Brown property next to the Housing Authority office, ProStar patrols providing additional security, travel and training for Housing Authority staffers as well as all environmental assessments and planning. It will pay for half of the Elder Activity/Community Center with the Tribe picking up half.

During this time, the Tribe has contributed more than \$5 million so

that some of these projects also include folks at various income levels.

"GRTHA (Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority) has been able to effectively leverage other funds with its HUD housing grants and Tribal sponsored housing programs



Carina Kistler Ginter

to provide quality housing for Grand Ronde Tribal members," said the report. "In addition, GRTHA has utilized its resources and policies to help create safe inviting neighborhoods..."

"It is very generous and very thoughtful of (Tribal Council) to do it," said GRTHA Director Carina Kistler Ginter. "That's how you build healthy communities, by combining mixed income levels," she said.

In its evaluation of fund recipients, the review looked at 11 program areas including organizational structure, policies, financial management and maintenance.

labor standards were reviewed in a report issued in January, 2003, and no labor standards issues remained unresolved at the time of the current report.

Specifically, the report made these comments:

■ **Management and Organizational Structure:** "impressive management systems and its obvious commitment to excellence."

■ **Policies, Procedures and Certifications:** "GRTHA's financial and fiscal management systems and the related systems of internal control do an exceptional job of ensuring that the financial records are current, accurate and complete and that financial assets are adequately safeguarded."

■ **Financial and fiscal Management Systems:** The review "disclosed no ineligible or unallowable uses of the program income generated... exceptional financial and internal control systems."

■ **Self-monitoring:** "While GRTHA's procedures meet the minimum requirements for self-monitoring, additional procedures would enhance the self-monitoring system."

■ **Indian Housing Plan Compliance:** "GRTHA has completed all goals and objectives from its 1998 and 1999 plans. The 2000 through 2004 IHP goals and objectives are in process and achieving reasonable progress."

■ **Maintenance and Inspection:** "GRTHA has a comprehensive maintenance program... and is doing an excellent job in ensuring rental units remain in good repair."

■ **Environmental Compliance:** For all grants and projects, environmental assessments were "complete and its determinations well

documented."

■ **Occupancy:** "no areas of non-compliance."

■ **Procurement and Contract Administration:** "...maintaining an excellent procurement system." The Housing Authority was commended for its efforts in "establishing a bulk purchase procedure for small dollar items where best prices are obtained from several sources annually rather than obtaining quotes each time a purchase is made."

■ **Indian Preference and Nondiscrimination:** "...no area of non-compliance."

What should Tribal members take away from this report? "That they have one of the best, most well-run Indian Housing authorities not only in the Northwest but in the country," said Ginter.

"I think it's important that this information be communicated to the membership," said Housing Board Chairman Chris Leno. "I know some (HUD) reviewers think of us as a model agency."

"HUD is referring Tribes all over to talk to us," said Ginter.

GRTHA also was nominated for three awards by the Northwest Indian Housing Association (NWIHA): Tribe of the Year, Indian Housing Authority Executive Director of the Year for Ginter and Indian Housing Authority Staff Person of the Year for Development and Construction Coordinator Duane Hussey. On September 15, NWIHA named Grand Ronde the Tribe of the Year and Ginter the Executive Director of the Year.

Leno attributes the success of the program to "good people working for the Tribe — current and previous." ■

New Tribal Housing Moving Along In Grand Ronde

■ "Lots of progress. Lots of movement. Lot of construction."

By Ron Karten

The Tribal Housing Division is firing on all cylinders. It broke ground for the upcoming 72-unit mixed income development back in June. Today, the houses are going up.

"They could come as fast as a house a day," said Development Construction Coordinator Duane Hussey, when all of the subcontractors are on the case.

Already, the 20-acre site south of Tyee Road on the Melcher property, has been "reshaped to our component design," he said. "All of the road base is in. All of the sewer lines are in. Fifty percent of the water lines are in. One hundred percent of the purple lines, for reused water, are in place. Plumbing is ready in four units."

The plan included setting up a plant right on site to build the wood framed structures, and at present, all 22 three-bedroom



Home Site — Work is continuing on the new 20-acre site which is south of Tyee Road on the Melcher property. It will be 72 new housing units.

homes are complete; all 28 two-bedroom homes are complete; and the crew is working on the 12 one-bedroom units. The project also will include two five-bedroom units and eight four bedroom units.

In all, 54 units will be slated for family low-income renters while 18 will accommodate families at market rates. Federal NAHASDA (Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act) dollars are funding the

low-income units. The Tribe is kicking in for the market rate units.

In the southeast quadrant of the park, the plans will accommodate a child care facility that is still under consideration by the Tribal Council.

"We're pouring footings every other day," said Hussey.

The structures are the same design as the first low-income family units now adjacent to the Housing Department on Tyee Road. A park

for the development will include a water feature and an outdoor basketball court. Walking trails, security lighting, pedestrian sidewalks and street lighting all will be included in the development, according to Hussey. A stream runs the full length of the project from north to south.

"Lot of progress. Lot of movement. Lot of construction," he said. And it's only going to get faster as we introduce more and more subtrades. We're going to have buildings to live in before June next year."

"We worked diligently to enhance the market rate units to make them very attractive to Tribal members," said Carina Kistler Ginter, Housing Authority Executive Director. "We included preferred upgrades such as garages, play areas for children and walking paths noted in the recent survey distributed to Tribal member employees." ■