

Three amendments up for vote

MEETING continued
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Tribe at the time of the applicant's birth; be born to a parent who, unless deceased, was a Tribal member at the time of the application; and be accepted under the rules of the Tribal Enrollment Ordinance.

If approved in February, the proposed three enrollment amendments would extend the one-year waiting period between relinquishing membership in another Tribe and joining the Grand Ronde Tribe to five years, eliminate the requirement that an applicant have a parent enrolled in the Tribe at the time of the applicant's birth to be eligible for enrollment and disconnect Grand Ronde blood from the Restoration Act roll. Grand Ronde blood instead would be calculated from the blood degree of a direct ancestor on the official Tribal membership roll in place when the applicant is accepted as a member.

Since there are three separate votes, none, all or a combination of the proposals could pass.

Chris Leno said that of the 665 people denied Tribal membership since 1999's amendments, 249 were denied because applicants did not have a parent on the membership roll at the time of their birth and 49 were denied because they did not have an ancestor on the Restoration roll.

Leno also provided estimates on the decrease in per capita and timber payments each Tribal member would see if the amendments pass and Tribal membership increases by those 298 people.

Greene said that voter registration packets and forms were scheduled to be sent to adult Tribal members on Dec. 10 and that Jan. 11 is the deadline for registration forms to be postmarked or received by the BIA's Siletz Agency Office. People who do not register will not be eligible to vote.

Ballots will be sent on Jan. 22 to registered voters and Feb. 8 will be election day — ballots must be received by noon at the Siletz Agency Office.

After the presentation, Tribal Council members discussed the enrollment amendments.

Chris Mercier said he hopes the three amendments pass because the current enrollment rules "cause heartbreak and pain to many Tribal families."

"If they fail, the issue won't go away," Mercier said.

Wink Soderberg said changing the rules is up to Tribal members as they pick and choose from the three proposed amendments. "We started as one people," he added. "I think we have split up the Tribe by denying enrollment."

Reyn Leno advised Tribal members to be cautious in their vote. "It's really up to you, the membership," Leno said. "I think we will still have an issue if it passes or fails."

Kathleen Tom said she thought the Tribal Council in 1999 did not completely grasp the ramifications of enrollment amendments as far as splitting up families where one



Photos by Dean Rhodes

child is a Tribal member and a sibling is not. "It's an unfair process," she said.

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy added that "without members, there is no Tribe. If you be of Grand Ronde blood, you need to be a member."

After Tribal Council comments, Tribal members asked questions and commented on the proposed enrollment amendments.

Betty Bly asked why the new Tribal Council acted quickly after the Sept. 9 council election to alter the enrollment amendment vote from two to three questions, forcing a rescheduling of the enrollment amendment election.

Tribal Council member June Sell-Sherer, who was elected in September, said she thought the proposed amendments had less chance of passing as two questions instead of three.

Steve Bobb Sr., also elected in early September, said he felt the proposed changes were easier for people to understand as three questions instead of two.

Jack Giffen Jr. added that the new Tribal Council acted quickly because it thought a fast decision could keep the enrollment amendment election on its time frame.

However, Mercier said he is still unsure why the new Tribal Council acted so quickly. "I'm not entirely sure why it was rushed," he said.

Tribal member Marilyn Portwood said she thinks the Tribal

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy presented gifts to Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey during the Dec. 2 General Council meeting, which was held on the same day as Kimsey's 99th birthday. She is the Tribe's oldest member. Left, Kimsey smiled as General Council attendees sang "Happy Birthday" to her.

Council added confusion to the process by separating the proposals into three questions. She also said that if the third proposal — not tying Grand Ronde blood to the Restoration Act roll — does not pass, her granddaughter will not be admitted into the Tribe.

Deborah Scott said she did not like the five-year relinquishment proposal because her children, who are currently members of another

Tribe and cannot disenroll until they are 21, will have to wait five years before they can become Grand Ronde members. "Why should they be penalized for being in another Tribe?" she asked.

Former Tribal Council member Angie Blackwell said the enrollment issue is not difficult to understand. She said the 1983 enrollment requirements created a "Restoration Class" of members who are the only ones who can pass down their blood; people enrolled after 1984 can't. "We need the amendments to pass or we'll just have 1999 all over again," she said.

Monty Parazoo echoed Blackwell's sentiments, saying it is difficult for the Tribe to have two classes of members — those who can pass on their blood and those who can't. "People not on the Restoration roll are second-class citizens," he said. "It's not about the money, but about doing what is right."

Jackie Many Hides said enrollment will always be an issue for the Grand Ronde Tribe. "Indians with Indians is good," she added to a round of applause.

Additional informational meetings about the proposed constitutional amendments will be held Jan. 7 in Eugene at the University of Oregon's Many Nations Longhouse and 5:30 p.m. Jan. 10 at Embassy Suites Airport Hotel, 7900 N.E. 82nd Ave., Portland.

In addition, Greene and Leno's presentation has been posted on the Tribal member side of the Web site at www.grandronde.org. ■

In other action:

Other noteworthy items that occurred during the Dec. 2 General Council meeting included:

- ◆ Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy honored Nora Kimsey on her 99th birthday with presents. Birthday cake and the singing of "Happy Birthday" honored the Tribe's oldest member.
- ◆ Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Shelley Hanson gave a presentation in which she stressed the growing interest in receiving grants. In 2007, the Community Fund topped \$40 million in grants since it started 10 years ago. In 2006, the fund received 293 requests and funded 189 for a 64 percent approval rate. In 2007, 435 requests were received — an increase of 67 percent — and 139 grants were funded. "The amount of interest is growing exponentially," Hanson said, citing increased advertising, quarterly outreach events and increased community need as reasons. The downside, Hanson said, is flat funding, so the percentage of grants approved is down to 31 percent. However, since its inception, the Community Fund has approved 56 percent of requests, she added.
- ◆ Eleven Elders were nominated to four open seats on the Elders' Committee. Nominees are Beryle Contreras, Linda Branson, Butch LaBonte, Louise Medeiros, Dakota Whitecloud, Violet Folden, Val Grout, Gladys Hobbs, Cheri Butler, Diana Norton and Robert Parazoo. Election will be from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 6, at the Community Center. Voting is walk-in only.
- ◆ Tribal offices will close Dec. 24-25 for the Christmas holiday.
- ◆ Violet Folsom, Jolanda Catabay and Betty Reed won the \$50 door prizes while Susie Lash won the \$100 prize.
- ◆ The next General Council meeting will be held 11 a.m. Jan. 6 at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde.