

Community meetings tackle economic development, Tribal services ideas

By Dean Rhodes and
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Smoke Signals staff writers

Build a water park at Spirit Mountain Casino?

Invest in urban real estate?

Hire a Tribal economic development director?

Construct storage units in Grand Ronde?

Those ideas and more were suggested during the five Community Membership meetings held in Grand Ronde; Tacoma, Wash.; Clackamas, a suburb of Portland; Eugene and Bend between May 4 and 9 when Tribal members were asked for their ideas on ways the Tribe could develop economically.

Planning and Grants Development Manager Kim Rogers said suggestions from the five Community Membership meetings will help identify needs and priorities for use in community planning, budgeting, program design and grant proposals.

At the Community Meeting held May 6 in Clackamas, suggestions for future Tribal economic development ranged from building a water park near Spirit Mountain Casino and adding a golf course, getting involved in renewable energy, promoting cultural tourism, real estate investments in Portland and funding small business incubators in Portland, Eugene, Grand Ronde and Salem.

Tribal member Eric Bernando said he would eventually like to see the Tribe earning about 30 percent of its revenue from non-casino businesses.

Tribal Elder Bernadine Shriver supported projects that would make the casino more family friendly.

Another Tribal member suggested Tribal representatives contact the state and University of Oregon Business School as a way to find economic development resources.

In Tacoma on May 5, Eugene Tribal member Andy Jenness said that before discussing specific ventures, the Tribe ought to "develop a systematic process for looking at ventures."

"We kind of have the cart before the horse," Jenness said in Eugene. "The Tribe needs to develop a process for looking at economic development."

"We need an economic development director and the Tribe doesn't have one," said Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg, who also supports Tribally owned storage spaces in



Photo by Ron Karten

In Bend, Tribal Elder Clyde Stryker and friend, Joan McKenzie, look at the many ideas for the Tribe before selecting the ones that interest them most.



Photo by Ron Karten

Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy at the Community Membership meeting in Tacoma.

Grand Ronde as a way to start.

"We need something simple so we can get our feet on the ground," Soderberg said about the storage unit proposal in Clackamas.

In Eugene on May 8, Tribal member Monty Parazoo backed buying buildings for Tribal offices in Eugene and Portland, and renting out the buildings' other offices as a way to make money.

At almost every meeting, Tribal members suggested hiring a Tribal economic development director, but when it came time to vote on ideas, the economic development director did not receive a single vote, Rogers said.

Others suggested establishing a small business development office to help Tribal members start their own small businesses with Tribal seed money.

Regarding Tribal member services, Clackamas meeting participants suggested bringing the Lifeways program back, more educational services, such as a Tribal library, in the Portland office and sending out health representatives to home visit Elders and pregnant women, among other suggestions.

In Tacoma and Eugene, Tribal members supported podcasting or webcasting Tribal Council meetings so Tribal members unable to attend meetings in Grand Ronde can stay informed about Tribal business.

"It's an odd feeling being outside," said Tribal Elder Rebecca Crocker, who is now living and working in Washington state.

Along those same lines in Bend, Tribal member Christie Loomis suggested, and many Bend Tribal members voted for, opening a satellite office in the booming central Oregon city.

Looking in the opposite direction, Redmond Tribal Elder Estelle McCafferty wondered if a Tribal effort to "spiff up Grand Ronde" would be beneficial for the Tribe.

In Eugene, Tribal members suggested creation of a Tribal member services handbook that would ex-

plain all of the possible services and benefits, from rental assistance to educational scholarships, that are available.

Other Tribal members in Eugene suggested the creation of gas vouchers for Tribal Elders to combat the escalating cost of filling up the tank.

The Community Membership meetings received varying degrees of interest from Tribal members. There were about 100 in Grand Ronde, 38 in Tacoma, 42 in Portland, 50 in Eugene and 45 in Bend, including Tribal staff and Tribal Council members.

Attendance was down from the 2007 meetings, but Rogers said that the enrollment issue last year may have been a draw for more members.

Rogers said that all of the 2008 suggestions for economic development and Tribal services will be given to Tribal Council, even those that didn't receive any votes in the "dot voting" exercise.

Top items from the 2008 meetings included building a water park at Spirit Mountain Casino, diversifying the Tribal economy, providing members assistance with small business development and legal services, expanding the Lifeways program, finding a solution to enrollment issues and providing a Tribal office in Bend.

The dot voting totals from the various meetings will be combined and an overall summary prepared that will be available to the membership, Rogers said. ■



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Tribal Elder Marta Clifford talks with Cultural Resources Director David Lewis and his staff before the start of the Eugene Community Membership meeting held May 8 at the Valley River Inn.

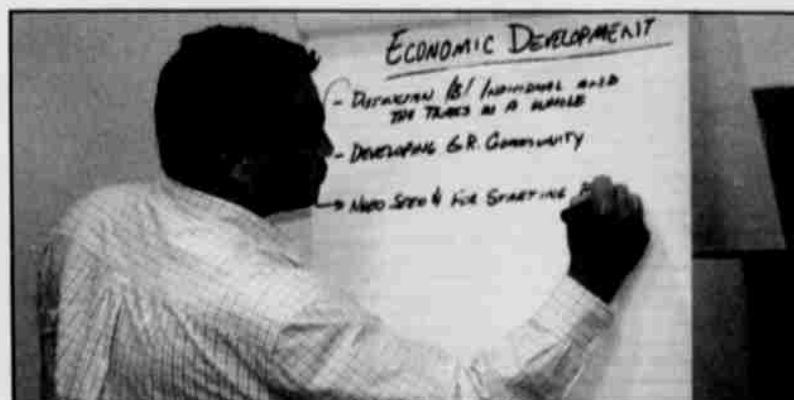


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Tribal Director of Development Pete Wakeland writes down economic development suggestions from Tribal members during the May 4 Community Membership meeting held in Grand Ronde.