

Tribe, Polk County Sheriff reach agreement

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

With a week to spare, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Polk County Sheriff's Office reached an agreement that maintains enhanced 24-hour patrols in the 32-square-mile Grand Ronde area during the 2010-11 budget year.

Polk County Sheriff Bob Wolfe signed the agreement on June 23, a week before the county's new fiscal year was set to begin on July 1.

In May, it appeared the enhanced patrols funded by the Tribe would end when Wolfe rejected a \$450,000 grant from Spirit Mountain Community Fund, the charitable arm of the Tribe, because he did not like having to apply for funds annually

and did not like a 30-day termination clause.

However, Wolfe and Tribal officials both said they wished to continue the enhanced patrols, which employed five deputies and a sergeant at a substation located next to Spirit Mountain Casino.

Wolfe said the agreed-upon funding is only for the 2010-11 budget year, prevents Sheriff's Office budget cuts and the Tribe from having to seek other patrol options.

Tribal member and Tribal Director of Development Peter Wakeland told the Polk County *Itemizer-Observer* that he was pleased to see the patrols continue.

"We enjoy the relationship we have with Polk County and it is our

mission to continue that," Wakeland said. "I'm very glad that we could get it worked out."

Wakeland said that enhanced patrols are a key component of security in the Grand Ronde area and at Spirit Mountain Casino.

"Our best option at this point was to try to help the sheriff find a way to provide the enhanced service," Wakeland said.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has funded the Polk County Sheriff's Office for 16 years and the Community Fund offered Wolfe the same level of funding that his department received for the past five years.

Since 1997, the Community Fund has granted more than \$5 million

to the Sheriff's Office.

However, because of escalating costs, the \$450,000 in Tribal funding is \$105,000 less than it costs the Sheriff's Office to conduct the enhanced Grand Ronde patrols. Therefore, it required the Sheriff's Office to reduce the number of deputies in Grand Ronde from six to four. A sergeant and patrol deputy will be re-assigned, but Wolfe canceled layoff notices in his department.

Wolfe said that he intends to continue meeting with Tribal representatives so that a long-term funding solution will be in place before September so that he can budget more accurately for next fiscal year. ■

'Obviously, everyone is opposed to this'

CASINO continued
from front page

The Grand Ronde Tribe, along with the other eight federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, have long opposed a private casino, especially in the Portland metropolitan area, because of the effect it would have on casino revenues that support various Tribal programs and benefits, from education to health to housing to charity.

Tribal member, Tribal lobbyist and Oregon Tribal Gaming Alliance Manager Justin Martin said a Tribal campaign team has been organized and sign-off from all nine Tribes is being sought.

"Obviously, everyone is opposed to this," Martin said. "Beyond Grand Ronde, I think it would have a devastating effect on the Indian gaming industry. What's next? If it's one this time, a private, constitutionally guaranteed monopoly, what's to stop it from happening next election cycle, and the cycle after that? What's to keep private investors from going to Salem next? Eugene? Medford and Bend? That's a real problem for the Indian gaming industry."

Martin said that a Portland-area casino would exacerbate the urban-rural divide in Oregon and take good-paying, steady jobs out of rural Oregon, where most Tribal casinos are located, and transfer them to urban areas.

"It just becomes a situation of picking and choosing which com-

munity deserves these jobs more," Martin said. "And, as always, if you get a Portland casino, you're taking jobs out of rural Oregon and you're looking at the benefits for Portland and Multnomah County. There are no longer any benefits in the creation of jobs and economies in rural Oregon."

The private casino also would affect Tribal charitable donations.

"Since 1997, the Grand Ronde Tribe has invested nearly \$51 million in non-profit agencies in the Willamette Valley that provide critical social services to those communities," said Tribal member and Spirit Mountain Community Fund Executive Director Shelley Hanson.

"The private casino would have a catastrophic effect on Grand Ronde's ability to invest in services that directly impact our friends, neighbors and their communities. Our investments support safety net health clinics, domestic violence shelters, food banks, homeless shelters and many more services.

"Together, the five major Tribal foundations have contributed more than \$90 million throughout the state supporting critical community services. How will that gap be filled if the private casino initiative is successful?"

"During this recession, we are seeing that Tribal funding is allowing many non-profits to continue their good work and helping children and families with shelter, food, school clothing and other criti-

cal services."

A recent study from ECONorthwest, a Portland consulting firm, said that the proposed private casino at the long-shuttered Multnomah Greyhound Park in Wood Village would cause such a reduction in state video lottery gaming revenue that it would represent an overall loss for public services, such as schools.

Backers of the private casino have pledged to designate 25 percent of its gambling revenue for distribution to schools, cities and other public services, while the other 75 percent goes to investors.

However, the ECONorthwest study estimates that the casino would bring in about \$480 million in annual revenue, earning about \$120 million for the state.

But, the report says, Oregon Lottery profits for schools would drop by about \$93 million a year, wiping out most if not all of the gain in state revenue.

"It would be an absolutely phenomenal hit," Martin said about Tribal income, particularly to Grand Ronde's more than 5,000 members. "It would negate some gains we've been able to make. We've had 15 years of economic success, but that certainly doesn't make up for 29 years of Termination."

"Ninety-four percent of our dollars go right back into government programs; health, education, housing, Elder pensions. The 6 percent goes back to the state in non-profits

and charitable. So, almost 100 percent of those dollars are spoken for unlike the privatization by these foreign investors and these two rich guys from Lake Oswego. That's going into their pockets.

"You're talking about money going into government spending for the good of Tribal citizens vs. money going into somebody's pockets. That's a shame."

Wood Village casino backers needed to gather 110,358 signatures of registered voters to amend the state Constitution and collect 82,769 signatures to designate where the proceeds would be allocated.

Clairvest, a Toronto private equity investment firm that has invested in several casino proposals, has spent more than \$1 million on the petition effort to put both proposals in the ballot.

Martin said if they are willing to spend that much money on the front end collecting signatures, he doesn't know how much they are willing to spend on the back end trying to get it passed.

But, Martin said, there is a limited amount of gaming money available in Oregon and the private casino is bound to hurt lottery revenue.

"You've got a desperate attempt from foreign investors and two well-to-do gentlemen from Lake Oswego trying to make this constitutionally guaranteed monopoly viable to Oregon," he said. "That is insulting to Oregonians." ■



Available Now!
\$5.00

Available at the reception desk in the Governance Building

9615 Grand Ronde Road
Grande Ronde, OR 97347

postage and handling extra

503-879-5211 1-800-422-0234

Ad created by George Valdez

Free online learning source

The information includes:

Everyday life
Math and money
Computer training
Online classes

Work and career information

Check it out at www.gcflearnfree.org ■