

# Casino CEO expects flat year

**Ferguson briefs General Membership at Sept. 11 meeting**

**By Dean Rhodes**

*Smoke Signals editor*

Flat.

That was Spirit Mountain Casino Chief Executive Officer Rodney Ferguson's report for 2011 and prediction for 2012 regarding casino revenue during the Sept. 11 General Council meeting held in the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde.

Ferguson said that Spirit Mountain Casino is faring relatively well compared to other gaming enterprises in the country during the continued economic doldrums.

"Fourteen million Americans are still unemployed and Oregon is near the top," he said.

Ferguson cited figures showing that since 2007 the Oregon Lottery was down 6.1 percent in revenue, Las Vegas was down 14 percent and Mississippi was off 25 percent. Meanwhile, Spirit Mountain is down only 7.9 percent.

"We've fared very well compared with the rest of the gaming industry," Ferguson said.

Ferguson said the national economy, as well as Oregon's continued high unemployment rate, and international events, such as the European debt crises and unrest in the Middle East, continue to affect casino operations as guests concerned about the fluctuating stock market and gas prices are spending the same amount of money per visit at Spirit Mountain, but are reducing the number of trips they make to Grand Ronde.

Comparing numbers from August 2010 and August 2011, net revenues and profit at Spirit Mountain are almost identical, as is the dividend that Spirit Mountain sends to the Tribe to fund governmental operations, per capita payments, education, health care and other

Tribal programs.

Ferguson said some good news is that revenue has increased at Spirit Mountain Lodge, where the \$59-a-night room rate appears to be a price point that guests like. In addition, income at the Cedar Plank Buffet increased as guests seek bargains for their gaming dollars.

Ferguson said the experiment of selling alcohol on the casino floor has proven to be a successful revenue generator as well.

Meanwhile, Ferguson said the casino has managed to reduce costs and expenditures by 1.5 percent.

He reported that there are currently 152 Tribal members out of 1,390 employees at the casino for an 11 percent Tribal member employment percentage. In 2010, Tribal members accounted for 10 percent of casino employees — 155 out of 1,540.

Ferguson emphasized that the Tribal member percentage in management positions, such as directors, managers and supervisors, is higher than in non-supervisory positions. For example, 36 percent of the directors at the casino are Tribal members.

"Over the last 10 years, Tribal employment has been between 9.5 and 11 percent," he added.

The outlook for 2012, Ferguson said, is continued flatness in the economy.

"There is nothing out there that signifies a major change in the economy," he said.

Tribal member Jan Reibach thanked the casino staff and Tribal Council for the work they are doing in difficult economic times.

"I think the staff is doing a great job," Reibach said. "I've traveled around the country and there are places that are way worse off than



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Spirit Mountain Casino Chief Executive Officer Rodney Ferguson gives a report regarding 2011 casino revenues and predictions for 2012 revenues to the membership during the General Council meeting held at the Tribal Community Center on Sunday, Sept. 11.**

we are."

Ferguson said renovations to Legends and The Summit are being discussed, as well as replacing the carpet at the casino.

In other actions, Tribal Director of Operations John Mercier and Cultural Resources Manager David Lewis briefed the membership on the Sept. 10 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Tribe, Bureau of Land Management and Nature Conservancy regarding the Table Rocks area near Medford. (See story on page 8 of this issue of *Smoke Signals*.)

The Tribe also honored the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks by posting a new "Never Forget" flag

during the cultural presentation. The Tribe received the flag from organizers of the Salem Field of Flags event held in Riverfront Park over the Sept. 11 weekend.

Tribal member Jolanda Catabay sang the national anthem and a moment of silence was held to honor the victims of the terrorist attacks that occurred a decade ago.

Door prize winners were Nancy Coleman, Chip Tom, Wayne Sell, Les McKnight, Kathleen Tom (donated to the Elders Committee), Bob Duncan, Betty Reed, Delores Knight and Jolanda Catabay.

The next General Council meeting will be held 11 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 2, in Eugene. ■

## Committee & Special Event Board meeting days and times

Below is the most current information on the meeting days and times for Tribal Committees and Special Event Boards:

- Ceremonial Hunt Board meets as needed. Chair: Shonn Leno.
- Cultural Trust Board meets at 4 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. Chair: Perri McDaniel.
- Culture Committee meets at 1 p.m. the first Wednesday of the month in Modular No. 3. Chair: Kathy Provost.
- Education Committee meets at 5:15 p.m. on the first Monday of the month in the Adult Education Building. Chair: Shelby Rogers.
- Elders' Committee meets at 10 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month in the Elders' Activity Center. Chair: Gladys Hobbs.
- Enrollment Committee meets quarterly in Room 204 of the Governance Building. Acting Chair: Robert Schmid.
- Fish & Wildlife Committee meets at 5:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of the month at the Natural Resources Building. Chair: Harold Lyon.
- Health Committee meets at 10 a.m. the second Wednesday of the month in the Tribal Wellness Center. Acting Chair: Patti Tom-Martin.
- Powwow Special Event Board meets at 5 p.m. the first Thursday of the month at the Tribal Community Center. Chair: Dana Ainam.
- Rodeo Special Event Board meets at 6 p.m. the first Thursday of the month at the Tribal Rodeo Office. Acting Chair: Harold Lyon.
- Social Services Committee meets at 4 p.m. the second Monday of the month in the Social Services Conference Room. Chair: Ron Hudson.
- Timber Committee meets at 5 p.m. the second Thursday of the month at the Natural Resources Building. Chair: Bob Mercier.
- Veterans Special Event Board meets at 4 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month in the Tribal Community Center. Chair: Dakota Whitecloud.

## EFFECTIVE MAY 1, 2011

### Changes to Social Services Emergency Assistance and Medical Gas Voucher Program

For all income criteria programs, wage verification for past 60 days (wage stubs) will need to be submitted. If client has not worked for a period of time, client will need to submit a printout from their State Employment Office or printout from Oregon Self Sufficiency Office as verification of income. Rental/deposit or utility assistance may be utilized only one time in a 24-month rolling calendar period and is not to exceed the maximum contribution of \$1,000 per household within any 24-month rolling calendar period.

#### Medical Gas Vouchers

Social Services will not provide gas vouchers for medical appointments, counseling or drug & alcohol treatment. The only exception to this is for scheduled treatment plans, (i.e.: radiation, chemotherapy, surgery, etc.) and has caused hardship on the family, medical gas vouchers can be distributed to meet the need of the circumstances. A copy of all scheduled treatment plans must be received before client is eligible to receive this service. Assistance will end on the date of the last treatment appointment.

For a complete copy of policy or questions, please contact Tammy C. Garrison at 503-879-2077. ■