

All 13 candidates attend annual forum

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Thirty Tribal and community members turned out for the 2012 Tribal Council Candidates Forum held Wednesday, July 25, in the Tribal gymnasium to hear all 13 candidates introduce themselves, answer two rounds of questions and give a closing statement.

The event lasted two hours. Individual responses were limited to one and two minutes.

Questions from the audience covered such longstanding Tribal issues as per capita, enrollment, casino operations, economic development and ethics. A new topic of inquiry was whether candidates would support a urinalysis test for Tribal Council members and background checks for candidates.

Tribal Executive Officer Chris Leno introduced the candidates and read questions while Tribal Elder Alton Butler was the timekeeper.

AV Sound Technician Wendell Olson and Web Specialist-trainee T.J. McKnight taped the event for broadcast over the Tribal Web site, where it is available for viewing at www.grandronde.org.

The 13 Tribal members running for Tribal Council are incumbents Cheryle A. Kennedy and Toby McClary and challengers Billy Joe Bobb, Jon George, Solomon George, Charles Haller II, Denise Harvey, Andy Jenness, Jesse Knight, Allen Lane-Butler, Lonnie Leno, Mark Mercier and Brenda Tuomi.

Ballots were mailed to Tribal voters on July 25 and are due back by Saturday, Sept. 8. ■

ATTENTION TRIBAL MEMBERS

COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL EVENT BOARD VACANCIES

The following Committees and Special Event Boards have vacant positions.

Social Services

2 Vacancies

Please send completed applications to the Lauri Smith, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347.

Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center institutes Broken Appointment Policy

In an effort to make medical services more efficient, the Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center (H&WC) has approved and instituted a broken appointment policy for medically-related appointments at the H&WC. To qualify as a broken appointment a patient must either not show up for their appointment, show up more than 10 minutes late or give less than 24 hours notice of cancellation. When any of these events occur, the patient is notified in writing. After the third broken appointment in a six-month time frame, the patient will not be allowed to schedule routine appointments. However, they will be offered a "sit and wait appointment" — the chance to sit and wait for an opening with a provider. This probationary period will last for six (6) months. The H&WC has a process for reminding patients of appointments and strives to notify patients of appointments the day before.

The broken appointment policy is very important as broken or missed appointments create unused time in a provider's schedule, which is inefficient financially and leads to barriers to accessing care. Ultimately, a broken appointment policy exists to improve access to care for all patients and is critical to providing responsive, cost-effective health services. ■

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Tribe approached Congress twice in 20 years

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land be designated reservation land by Congress.

The amendment would allow the Tribe to combine the two-step process for real property that is within the boundaries of its original 69,100-acre reservation granted to the Tribe in 1857.

The amendment is supported by the U.S. Department of Interior and by the boards of commissioners in Polk and Yamhill counties.

Michael Black, director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, testified that the BIA supports the amendment to the Grand Ronde Reservation Act.

Schrader, who attended the House hearing, said his goal is to deal with the process of bringing off-reservation land into trust.

"The process is pretty Byzantine and difficult," Schrader said, citing the Western Oregon Termination Act, which terminated the Grand Ronde Tribe in 1954. "By establishing exterior reservation boundaries, which reflect the Tribe's original reservations, pre-Termination, as I am seeking to do ... will provide the BIA with the ability to process the fee-to-trust applications as on-reservation, thus expediting the process, get rid of some of the bureaucracy and make it much easier for the Tribes to add to their existing reservation lands."

"The Tribe is hampered in its efforts to restore land within its original reservation by a lengthy and cumbersome Bureau of Indian Affairs process," Leno testified. "Be-

cause the Tribe does not have exterior reservation boundaries, all parcels are processed under the more rigorous off-reservation acquisition regulations — even if the parcel is located within the boundaries of the original reservation.

"After the land is accepted into trust, the Tribe must take an additional step of amending its Reservation Act through federal legislation to include the trust parcels in order for the land to be deemed reservation land."

Leno said the Grand Ronde Tribe has approached Congress twice in the last 20 years to amend its Reservation Act to include trust lands. The Tribe currently owns slightly more than 10,312 acres that are designated reservation status.

"This process is unduly time-consuming, expensive, bureaucratic and often takes years to complete," Leno said.

Leno said the amendment would establish that real property located within the boundaries of the Tribe's original reservation will be treated as on-reservation land and deemed part of the Tribe's reservation once it is taken into trust. In addition, it would make it so that the Tribe's lands held in trust on the date of the legislation would automatically become part of the Tribe's reservation.

"H.R. 726 would not only save Grand Ronde time and money,



Reyn Leno

which would be better utilized serving its membership, but would also streamline the department's land-into-trust responsibilities to Grand Ronde, thus saving taxpayer money," Leno said.

Siletz Tribal Chairwoman Dolores Pigsley and Robert Garcia, chair of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, said they support the Grand Ronde bill.

Tribes opposes Siletz legislation

As Kennedy did in February, Leno also spoke in opposition to a bill that would expand the Siletz Reservation. Grand Ronde opposes the bill — H.R. 6141 and Senate Bill 908 — because it attempts to re-characterize the Coast Reservation, which was set aside for all western Oregon Tribes, as the Siletz Reservation.

"We believe the purpose of the Siletz legislation is to eliminate the historic claims of other Tribes to the former Coast Reservation, which was set aside for all Tribes in western Oregon, by equating the boundaries of the Siletz Reservation (established in 1875) with the boundaries of the Coast Reservation (established in 1855)," Leno said in his written testimony.

Leno said the Coast Reservation was set aside for Indians throughout western Oregon, including the ancestral Tribes and Bands of the Grand Ronde from the Willamette, Umpqua and Rogue River valleys.

"Their proposed legislation is nothing more than a veiled attempt

to eradicate the claims of Grand Ronde and other western Oregon Tribes to the Coast Reservation," Leno said.

As he also did in February before the Senate, Garcia spoke against the Siletz legislation.

"I regret that we must oppose (the Siletz legislation) as introduced," Garcia said. "It would grant the Siletz, just one of the many Tribes forced to reside within the boundaries of the Coast Reservation, a unique right to claim favorable on-reservation treatment under the IRA (Indian Reorganization Act) for all land acquisitions in the area of overlap, including land that my Tribe lives on. ... The Siletz and only the Siletz are entitled to have treated as on-reservation acquisition of all the property they propose for trust within the 800,000 acres of the Coast Reservation. To give the Siletz this favorable treatment is unsupported by law, is historically inaccurate and is just unfair to my people."

Pigsley testified in support of the legislation.

"We support the Siletz's objective of taking into trust land in Lincoln County that has historically been within the exclusive reservation land of the Tribe, but not the re-writing of history to expand the Siletz Reservation, and thereby excluding other federally recognized Tribes from their hereditary land claims," Leno said in the written testimony.

Also attending the House hearing were Tribal Council Secretary Jack Giffen Jr. and Tribal Attorney Rob Greene. ■