Ann Lewis named co-chair of Tribal-State economic group

By Ron Karten
Smoke Signals staff writer

Ann Lewis, the Tribe’s Commercial Real Estate manager, was elected co-chair of the Economic Development and Community Services tribal council on Nov. 15. Lewis has been attending the group’s quarterly meetings since the Tribal-Government to Government Summit held in 2012, and will serve as co-chair for three years.

As with all six clusters, Tribal representatives meet with their state counterparts. In this case, Lewis shares the duties with Lisa Ansell, Strategic Services manager for Business Oregon.

Business Oregon fosters business development in the state and houses the Oregon Economic and Cultural Trust and the Oregon Film and Video Office. According to the company’s website, Business Oregon is “a public-private partnership that provides comprehensive resources for Oregon businesses to help them succeed.”

Lewis described the Tribe’s recent investment in Arlington, Wash., based MicroGREEN Inc., maker of recycled hot and cold cups already being used by Alaska Airlines. The cups are made from recycled bottles, each four for four cups, and destined to be recycled again.

The project was approved through the state’s Department of Business, Enterprise, and International Relations.

“We’re helping with the carbon footprint,” said Lewis, “consistent with Tribal values.”

She said that the Elder housing project has been completed and a new apartment complex has been approved.

She also reported that the Tribe’s engagement in the former Willamette Cluster’s elementary and middle school building, purchased in 2011, into a tourism destination museum.

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Yamhill County is seeking volunteer drivers to transport local veterans to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Portland. Volunteers are unpaid, but a meal is provided for their time. For more information or to volunteer, call Jim Cox at 503-472-4771.

Face-to-face sessions valued

ROUNDTABLE continued from front page

In the morning breakout sessions, McClary led the Tribal side of the discussion for the Education Cluster.

“We voiced our appreciation to (Education Deputy Superintendent) Rob Saxton for working to make the state’s new Indian Education position a reality,” said McClary.

The position had been funded since the early 1980s, discontinued in the early 1990s, though it held a part-time status for a decade, and finally reinstated in this year’s biennial budget.

The state has been working to make this happen since the position moved from full-time to part-time in the late 1990s, said April Campbell, formerly the Grand Ronde Tribe’s Education Department manager and now the Indian Education Program specialist for the state Education Department.

Among the discussion items, four took center stage: development and inclusion of culturally responsive Native American curricula, ways to close the achievement gap for Native American students, the mascot bill and the Chalkboard Project that is collecting data about the current educational experiences of Tribal students in Oregon.

Regarding curriculum, discussions included a Grand Ronde approved Native American curriculum for fourth-grade students. Its first implementation came this year at Willamina Elementary School.

“Our goal and hope is to have a curriculum for all grades where Tribal students are represented in specific regions across the state. We’ve created the template,” McClary said.

“We explained our position on the mascot bill (SB 215): if there would have been as much effort on an accurate curriculum as on mascots, this wouldn’t be an issue.

“They seemed open to exploring ways to accommodate Indian mascots within the state’s school districts,” he said of the state Education Department.

“It is more important that students are educated in our traditional practices, our culture and beliefs,” McClary added, “and an accurate representation (of Oregon’s Indian peoples).

The takeaway for the state, said Campbell, is ‘the opportunity (the summit made possible) to learn more about individual Tribal education programs and identify Tribal education needs.’

“Having April being part of it really helped,” said Johnhaid. “It was a very positive exchange.”

Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffin Jr. led the session with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“There were several points of discussion,” Giffin said. “We expressed the Tribe’s gratitude to the Fish and Wildlife Department for allowing the Tribe to take the first salmon of the year at Willamette Falls, a traditional fishing site for the Grand Ronde people.

“We asked to expand on that,” Giffin said, “to allow us to build a platform there to net the first salmon. It’s a more traditional way.”

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife leaders said they wanted to have discussions on the idea.

There were further discussions on fish, deer and elk habitat.

Ted Noel, Tribal Resources Manager Michael Wilson said, “It was very beneficial for Tribal leadership to talk to OD(O)FW Director Roy Elicker directly.”

The Tribal department has been working for a year and a half on its largest fish and wildlife plan, setting strategic goals for the Tribe concerning fish and wildlife not just on the reservation, but throughout the Tribe’s ceded lands.

“It’s a big step toward taking on more responsibility and authority for managing these resources and furthering Tribal sovereignty,” Wilson said.

“I believe these conversations with the director are going to be very helpful in getting this wrapped up.”

“We’re always happy to meet with state officials,” Giffin said. “We’re always willing to be a partner.”

“The Tribal challenge has always been having its voice heard and (at the summit) we were really listened to,” said Johnston.