

Tribal capital improvements will continue in 2014

General Council briefed on projects on tap for this year

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

A new food bank.
A 20-unit apartment complex.
A new lift station on Ackerson Road to decrease Tribal dependence on the local sanitary district and Polk County.

Those are some of the capital improvement projects occurring in 2014 that will improve Tribal members' lives, said Tribal Engineer Jesse White during a presentation at the March 2 General Council meeting held in the Community Center.

White, who was hired by the Tribe in October 2011, briefed the membership on the combined Engineering, Public Works, Wastewater Treatment and Facilities Maintenance Department, which he manages, as well as projects that will make life better for Tribal members in 2014.

The new food bank will have 3,000 square feet of warehouse and distribution area and be located closer to Tribal housing on the Curl Property on the west side of Grand Ronde Road next to the current recycling area.

The current food bank facility near Uyxat Powwow Grounds is "aging dramatically," White said.

"This will be a nice place for distribution of food supplies," White said.

The 20-unit apartment complex will provide housing for low-income Tribal members who might be single and not in need of a larger residence.

It will be constructed on the



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Tribal Engineer Jesse White made the main presentation about Tribal capital improvement projects slated for 2014 during the March 2 General Council meeting held in the Community Center.

31.3-acre trust parcel known as the Smith Tract across the street from the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority Office.

And the Ackerson Road wastewater lift station will funnel more wastewater from the Tribal campus into the Tribe's two membrane bio-reactor plants.

"We are working on getting all of our Tribal facilities to be treated by these plants," White said.

During his presentation, White said his department's mission is to improve the quality of life for all Tribal members.

The Public Works Department, headed by John Mercier, has accomplished much in 2013, including installing a new culvert on Yoncalla Creek Road and overseeing the asbestos abatement at the old Wil-

lamina Middle School, which is being remodeled into the Tribal museum and cultural center, Chachalu.

In addition, Mercier coordinated the Tribe harvesting cedar trees from Willamette National Forest that were milled into planks that now are the southern exterior siding on Chachalu.

The two wastewater treatment plants, overseen by Lewis Younger, serve Elder housing and Tribal family housing.

"These plants meet all Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environmental Quality regulated water protection requirements,"

White said. "The good thing about these plants is they treat raw sewage for irrigation re-use, creating a drought-proof supply."

Facilities Maintenance is charged with maintenance of Tribal buildings, keeping the buildings clean and safe and maintaining the Tribal grounds and property, White said. Employees have been instrumental in the recent remodel of the Tribal Council conference room, the Tribal Court remodeling project, installing the house pole in the Governance Center Atrium and helping with development of the new community garden.

Facilities Maintenance also is charged with maintaining the Tribal Cemetery, Uyxat Powwow Grounds and the Natural Resources building off Hebo Road.

White said Engineering, which he

is directly involved in, works with many Tribal departments on capital improvement projects. Engineering also works closely with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office to ensure construction projects do not disturb Tribal historical or cultural artifacts.

Engineering has been busy working on the Chachalu remodel and the new women's transition house on Grand Ronde Road that will house eight clients.

White said his department also works closely with the new Tribal Employment Rights Office to ensure Tribal members and Indian-owned businesses work on Tribal capital improvement projects.

He said an Indian-owned business won the contract to remodel the women's transition house and two full-time workers on the project were Tribal members.

White added that TERO will be used on construction of the new apartment complex.

In other action, it was announced that the next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, April 6, at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde.

Jackie Many Hides, Val Alexander and Chloe Guardiola won the \$50 door prizes and Russell Wilkinson won the \$100 door prize. Beaded necklaces created by Tribal Council member Jon A. George also were raffled off.

Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Brian Krehbiel, Bobby Mercier, Jacob Holmes and Kailiyah Krehbiel performed the cultural drumming and singing to open the meeting.

Former Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. provided the invocation. ■

Tribal board to help in upcoming constitutional election

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council appointed the Tribe's current Election Board members to serve on a Bureau of Indian Affairs Special Board that will oversee the upcoming constitutional amendment election during its March 5 meeting.

Tribal voters will be asked in early June whether they want to institute term limits for Tribal Council service, as well as if they want to remove Bureau of Indian Affairs and Secretary of the Interior oversight and involvement in Tribal constitutional elections.

The current five members of the Tribal Election Board are Penny DeLoe, Joanne Mercier, Sharon Hanson, Michael Mercier and Deanna Johnston. The director of the BIA's Siletz Agency office will chair the special election board.

Tribal Senior Staff Attorney Deleen Aubertin Keller said registration forms will be sent out to Tribal members in early April. Since this will be a special BIA election, Tribal members wishing to vote will have to register. Being already registered to vote in Tribal elections will not suffice, Keller said.

"The only way to remove the BIA is to remove that requirement from your Constitution," Keller said at

the March 4 Legislative Action Committee hearing. "They are very happy to step out of this process as well, but the Constitution requires secretarial elections and secretarial approval of all amendments. ... If this passes, this will be the last time you have to do that."

The term limits proposal going to Tribal voters would limit future Tribal Council service to three consecutive three-year terms. After reaching that limit, a Tribal Council member would have to take a year off before becoming eligible to run again. The amendment, if passed, would not be retroactive to those currently serving on Tribal Council.

To amend the Tribal Constitution, at least 30 percent of registered Tribal voters must cast a ballot and at least 66.7 percent of those voting must approve the change.

In other action, Tribal Council approved a first reading of amendments to the Employment Action Review Ordinance that would send contested employment actions directly to Tribal Court for a hearing by a neutral third party and end the current Independent Review Board process that requires a three-member board of Tribal employees hear the case first.

Tribal Chair Reyn Leno said he

thinks the amendments will create a fairer process for employees.

Tribal Council also sent amendments to the Burial Fund Ordinance out for a second reading. New proposed amendments define the word "spouse" and allow those receiving the burial benefit to use some of the money to buy a Pendleton blanket from the Tribe for the funeral service.

Previously proposed amendments to the Burial Fund Ordinance increase the benefit to \$5,500 and up the reception benefit to \$300.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Appointed Alton Butler as the part-time Tribal Building Official;
- Approved Tribal credit cards for new Health Services Executive Director Jeffrey Lorenz and Po-

lice Officer Patrick McConnell, who will be able to purchase food, supplies and emergency veterinary care for his K-9 partner Nix-Wa;

- Declared March 14 as the per capita distribution date;
- Approved the Cougar Logging Unit timber sale;
- Extended the security contract with Advanced Security through the end of 2014;
- And approved enrollment of two infants into the Tribe.

Also included in the Tribal Council packet for March 5 was an authorization to proceed that set fees for Tribal cultural classes, which will remain free for Tribal members and require all others to reimburse the Tribe for the cost of materials, if applicable. ■

Foundation seeking applications

SALEM – West Valley Hospital Foundation scholarship applications for students in medically related fields of study became available on Feb. 1 and must be returned by Friday, March 28. Applicants must have a permanent residence in Polk County or be a West Valley Hospital employee or a family member of a West Valley Hospital employee, and must have applied to a college in their field of study before applying for the scholarship. Visit www.salemhealth.org/scholarships and click on the West Valley Foundation Scholarship link for more information and to download an application. Call 503-831-3456 for more information. ■