Council OKs two contracts for road rehabilitation, burn repair

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council approved two contracts that will allow road rehabilitation on Agency Creek and Yoncalla Creek roads as well as repair a burned-out unit in Tribal housing during its Wednesday, Aug. 26, meeting.

Since both projects will cost more than $100,000, they required Tribal Council approval per the Tribe's Procurement Policy.

Public Works Coordinator John Mercier said the road rehabilitation projects will repair and repave 4.3 miles of road on the Reservation.

If forecasted showers occurred over the Aug. 29-30 weekend, reducing the fire precaution level, contractor Pacific Excavation was ready to start immediately, Mercier added.

"We want to finish up this year, weather permitting," Mercier said.

The Housing Department repair contract, awarded to Chris Scholten Construction, will reconstruct a unit at 9533 Raven Loop that was burned out in a Jan. 21 fire.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Adopted amendments to the General Committee and Special Event Board Ordinance that will allow committees and special event boards to make donations if authorized by Tribal Council;
- Held a first reading on amendments to the Elders' Retirement Program and SSI Program Ordinance that will provide three months of benefits to surviving spouses of Tribal Elders;
- Appointed Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek as the Tribe's delegate to the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and approved paying the $2,400 annual membership dues. The other eight members of Tribal Council were named as alternate delegates;
- Approved a Tribal credit card for Fire Crew Boss Bryan Fendall for wildland fire and other emergency incident management needs;
- And approved the Tribe's annual application to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program funding, expected to be $118,845.

Also included in the Aug. 26 Tribal Council packet were authorizations to proceed to name the new human resources building as the Employment Services Center – ye?lan haws ("helping house") in Chinuk Wawa – and appointing Tribal Council member Chris Mercier as the Grand Ronde representative for the University of Oregon's President's Native American Advisory Council.

Land and Culture employees Bobby Mercier, Brian Krehbiel and Travis Stewart led several other Tribal members in the cultural singing and drumming to open the meeting.

During Other Business, Tribal Elder Betty Bly thanked Tribal Council Secretary Toby McClary for his six years of service. McClary is not seeking re-election and will not be available for the Sept. 9 meeting, meaning the Aug. 26 meeting was his last.

The meeting, in its entirety, can be viewed on the Tribal website, www.grandronde.org, under the News tab and then click on the Video link. ■

Volunteers needed

TILIKUM VILLAGE
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Tribal canoes will be displayed for viewing from 2 to 6 p.m. The Canoe Family also will demonstrate protocols with songs and dances.

In addition, a limited edition Tilikum Crossing Pendleton blanket will be available for purchase ($149 for Tribal members and $249 for others).

The new bridge received a Chinuk Wawa name in April 2014.

The Grand Ronde Tribe suggested a Native name to honor the original peoples of the Portland area, which is part of the Grand Ronde Tribe's ceded lands.

The proposed name, tilikum, is a Chinuk Wawa word for people, family or a gathering. Historically, the word is spelled "tilixam," a Chinuk Wawa word that is difficult to pronounce.

In the interest of giving the general public a word that is easy to say, the Tribe proposed spelling the word with a "k" instead.

The Tribe's proposed name was one of four finalists and the public was invited to vote on their favorite. The TriMet Naming Committee unanimously choose "Tilikum" – "Bridge of the People" – as the new bridge's name.

Earlier this year, the Tribe also gifted two basalt carvings and a large bronze medallion to TriMet that will help remind Portland and its residents that Native Americans have lived and continue to live along the shores of the river since time immemorial.

All three pieces, collectively called "We Have Always Lived Here," were created by Chinook artist Greg A. Robinson at the Gresham home of Grand Ronde Tribal member Greg Archuleta.

The Tribe's Public Affairs Department is still recruiting Tribal members to volunteer at or participate in the bridge's grand opening. For more information, contact Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark at 503-879-1418 or by e-mail at chelsea.clark@grandronde.org.

Tilikum Village is being organized by Clark and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin in coordination with TriMet. ■

Education takes center stage at Economic Summit

By Brent Merrill
Smoke Signals staff writer

Education in Oregon was the opening focus of the fourth annual Oregon Coast Economic Summit held Wednesday and Thursday, Aug. 26–27, at Spirit Mountain Casino.

The theme for the 2015 summit was "Education: The Pathway to Economic Development for Rural and Coastal Communities."

The event also served as an Oregon Legislative Coastal Caucus for several state senators and representatives, including District 5 Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay) who performed the role of host emcee.

Roblan said he got the idea to hold an economic summit after attending a similar event at UCLA. When he shared with his staff how much he learned from that event, they suggested hosting one for the Oregon Coast.

Roblan welcomed everyone to the summit and Grand Ronde Tribal members Bobby Mercier, Travis Stewart and Brian Krehbiel drummed in the Honor Guard.

Tribal Elder Alton Butler carried the Grand Ronde eagle staff, Tribal Elder Steve Bobb Sr. carried the American flag and Tribal Elder Raymond Petite carried in the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde flag. Mike Lane carried in the POW/MIA flag and Al Miller carried in the Oregon flag.

Tribal Council member Jon A. George gave the invocation and Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno welcomed summit attendees to the Tribe's homelands.

"Although some people believe that in 1983 when we were restored that maybe that's when we became Indians," said Leno, "that couldn't be farther from the truth. Our reservation was formed in 1857. Our original reservation was more than 60,000 acres of pristine timberlands. We believe that is what led to our termination in 1954. They wanted our land. They left us our cemetery and they left us our name. We never did quit being Indians. Grand Ronde has a long history and it's a real honor for us to have you here today."

Roblan introduced members of the bipartisan group of elected officials who make up the Coastal Caucus and said the reason for the summit is that the coastal Tribes – the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde — "stepped forward" and asked to be a part of the effort.

The four Tribes sponsored the summit along with the University of Oregon and Oregon State University, and all four Tribes were represented on the opening panel discussion by each Tribe's chairperson.

Leno represented Grand Ronde, Chair Delores "Dee" Pigsley represented Siletz, Chairman Mark Ingersoll represented Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw and Chair Barbara Meade represented Coquille.

The opening panel was an Oregon Tribal Governments Panel titled "A Road Map for State Efforts to Improve Opportunities and Outcomes for Native American Youth in Oregon."

"I'm excited that education is part of the focus today," said Roblan. "Your input is really important. We want kids to be able to go wherever they want to make a life for themselves and that is an important part of economic development."

Grand Ronde Tribal student Helen Tonso, who is a University of Oregon sophomore, introduced each panel member and Dr. Jason Younker (Coquille) moderated the panel.

"Our panel includes state and Tribal leaders who share a common goal to empower future generations through education," said Younker.

Lindsey Capps, who is the education policy adviser for Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, joined the Tribal leaders and fielded the first question.

Capps was asked how the state can make higher education more affordable to first generation Native American students. Capps said state educational leaders are looking at widening opportunities for all students, but in particular Native American and Alaskan Native students through increased investments in public universities and expansion of Oregon opportunity grants.

Capps also said expanding scholarships and lowering tuitions are key components to broadening educational opportunities for Oregon students.

Leno was asked about the teaching of the Chinuk Wawa language in public schools and to talk about the Tribe's success in getting the language added to school curriculums.

Leno said he grew up with the language and talked about its origins. He said the language's survival is important to Tribal leadership.

"We need to make our kids proud of who they are," said Leno. "We always say you need to know where you came from in order to know where you are going."

The final question was directed at Capps and the state of Oregon and had to do with teaching Chinuk Wawa at the college level. Capps then became the moderator for a moment when he deferred to Tribal leaders and asked a question of his own – "How can we at the state level help Tribes get Native language into the school systems?"

Leno talked about what the Grand Ronde Tribe has done in that regard.

"If you are going to change the opinion of Native American people and really make kids proud of who they are, you have to put the history of the nine Oregon Tribes in the schools," said Leno. "And then hopefully it will get out to your

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