

Feasibility study won't end in a decision

**POOL continued
from front page**

and General Council meetings and at this summer's Community Meeting to make his wishes for a pool known.

As a follow-up to the annual Community Meeting, members of Tribal administration held another meeting on Thursday, Dec. 10, at the Tribal Community Center to discuss a feasibility study being conducted on the possibility of a Tribal community pool.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno and Tribal Council members Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Denise Harvey, Brenda Tuomi and Jon A. George attended, as well as Tribal General Manager Dave Fullerton.

Planning Department Manager Rick George introduced Carl Sherwood of Robertson Sherwood Architects to the membership and explained that Robertson Sherwood, which was established in Eugene in 1973, has been involved in many local swimming pool projects, such the pools in Dallas and McMinnville, which Tribal members might be familiar with already.

"A total of 86 percent of those filling out a survey at the Community Meeting in June supported the development of a pool in Grand Ronde," Rick George said.

Rick George also said Tribal members expressed an interest in having more information about costs associated with different types of community pool projects.

"We are going through the process of a feasibility study," Rick George said. "Your Tribal Council appropriated money to contract out with a very competent firm to help us go through this process.

"This is a study of what kind of pool might fit this community. The feasibility study won't make a decision. It will provide good, sound information to you (the membership) and ultimately the Tribal Council.

"When Tribal Council makes a decision about a pool, they will make a decision that is well-informed. We want to hear from you whatever your thoughts are."

George said his team, which is made up of Tribal members, Tribal staff members and a Tribal Council member, includes Brenda Tuomi, Barbara Mercier, Jennifer Biesack, Jesse White, Joanie Dugger, John Mercier, Leslie Riggs, Patti Mercier, Shonn Leno and Tresa Mercier.

George's team has been doing background work on different types of pool projects and will be developing a timeline to complete the study. They also will develop a work plan.

George said the study will be completed by early to mid-March.

George's team has traveled to McMinnville, Dallas and Lincoln City to look at pools and talk to pool managers.

"We learned a lot," said George, whose team also looked at swimming pools in Veneta and at Seven Feathers Casino in Canyonville.

The next step, he said, is to complete a market evaluation and a needs assessment, and then settle on no more than two or three design options for a community pool. He also said Tribal members will be surveyed on the subject of a community pool in Grand Ronde.

"When the study is concluded, everything will be turned over to the Tribal Council and the executive office for the decision-making process," said George. "That will be

a separate process."

George then turned the meeting over to Sherwood, who said that he and his staff will be gathering information to include in the study on the type of pool the Grand Ronde community might want to see established on the Reservation.

Haller said he walked around the Tribal community and gathered as many as 200 signatures on a petition in support of establishing a community pool in Grand Ronde.

"We take the health and well-being of our youth and our Elders as being our number one priority," said Haller. "This could be a great addition to our community. I know it costs a lot, but in my opinion if it helps a couple of hundred Tribal members with their health problems, it would be one of our better investments."

Tribal member Jamie Adams said she agreed with Haller.

"This is a good move," said Adams. "You can't put a price on our health."

Gleason-Shepek and Tribal member Brian Krehbiel each said safety would be reason enough to build a community pool. Members then shared stories of learning to swim in the local rivers and how much safer it would be for today's youth to learn to swim in a pool.

Tribal Elder Nancy Renfrow asked what the annual maintenance costs would be for a community pool and how much annual insurance would cost the Tribe.

Dugger said she could not answer that question until the community was closer to making a decision on the type of pool project it wanted to build.

Renfrow then asked about the water bill associated with a community pool and cost of chemicals and a lifeguard. She said if you paid a lifeguard \$15 an hour, it would amount to roughly \$42,000 annually.

Tribal member Kim Contreras said that she thought a pool in

Grand Ronde was "a great idea."

"Our kids are worth it," said Contreras. "Our kids really need something to do out here."

Tribal Elder Marilee Norwest said she would be happy to pay an annual fee if that is what it would take for the community to have a swimming pool.

"I would pay," said Norwest. "I think it would be a good investment."

George said most of the pool projects researched were attached to Tribally owned and operated casinos and hotels, but that some Tribes have established community pools.

Some examples include the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Reservation, which has a swimming pool at its Tribal headquarters in Mount Pleasant, Mich., and the Chehalis Tribe of Oakville, Wash., built a 1,767-square-foot swimming pool as part of its 50,000-square-foot Community Center.

However, most Tribal community swimming pool projects are linked to a Tribe's economic development industries like casinos and hotels and some swimming pools are a part of the Tribe's health and wellness initiatives.

The Colorado River Indian Tribes have three swimming pools and a two-story water slide at its Blue-Water Resort and Casino complex and the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation of Brooks, Calif., and the Warm Springs Tribe of Oregon each operate an outdoor swimming pool at their casinos.

Rick George said his team would meet with the contractor to incorporate what they gathered from the membership as needs and priorities and begin the process of putting that information together.

"We will flesh out the concepts that best fit the community," said George.

About 40 people attended the two-hour meeting, which included a dinner of chili and cornbread. ■

Youth Powwow

Please join us at the
Tribal Gymnasium
December 21st
from 12:00 - 4:00 pm

Lunch will be provided

Grand Entry starts at 1:00



All ages welcome !!
join in and dance
Regalia is encouraged

For more information please contact: Brian Krehbiel at 503-879-4639

Please be respectful by not displaying Gang affiliation or bringing Drugs, Alcohol or weapons to this event.

Thank You!

The sponsoring Tribes of the Gathering of Oregon's First Nations event in Salem have decided to discontinue the January Powwow. We want to thank everyone who helped make our event a success. Thank you for 7 wonderful years of support!

