

Greyhound Park making way for Spirit Mountain at Wood Village

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

WOOD VILLAGE – Multnomah Greyhound Park is almost gone.

In its place will rise Spirit Mountain at Wood Village, a mixed-use development that will have a symbiotic relationship with the Grand Ronde Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno announced at a demolition ceremony held for the Greyhound Park on Tuesday, June 28, that the Tribally owned development will be a mixture of lodging, entertainment and housing, as well as complement the Tribe's 20-year-old casino in Grand Ronde.

"The membership wants us to look to diversify," Leno said while being interviewed by a KOIN-TV news crew before the ceremony started. "We look at this project as a diversification of our portfolio. We want to bring something that will reflect Wood Village and be a centerpiece like the one we are tearing down."

"This kind of reminds me of when we first started building our casino. We built what we could that would be successful and then we kept building on to it. Realistically, right now it is housing, entertainment and some other things."

Leno said that whatever is constructed will complement Spirit Mountain Casino.

"Entertainment is something we do really well," Leno said in his opening remarks. "We hope to tie in something here that can benefit Spirit Mountain. You come here, shop and get points, and you go to Spirit Mountain, or you go to Spirit Mountain and get benefits up here. We're not going to kill our own casino."

Wood Village Mayor Patricia Smith thanked the Tribe for purchasing the derelict property.

"I know that this is just going to be something that is going to benefit both the city and the Tribe," Smith said. "I have seen their architecture in Grand Ronde and I know they are not going to build something that looks like a gas station. ... The quality of the development will define Wood Village. We are going to have a great partnership with Grand Ronde and I know we will benefit each other."

Hundreds of people attended the demolition ceremony, getting their last chance to say goodbye to the iconic structure. Attendees mingled before the 10 a.m. event, discussing memories of betting on greyhound races as well as learning how to drive in the park's expansive parking lot.

Leno was accompanied by Tribal



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council member Brenda Tuomi uses an excavator to break out a window of Multnomah Greyhound Park's grandstand building during a demolition ceremony held at the park in Wood Village on Tuesday, June 28.



At left, Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno speaks during the demolition ceremony held at Multnomah Greyhound Park in Wood Village on Tuesday, June 28.

Visit the Tribe's
facebook
page to see more photos

Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. and Tribal Council members Brenda Tuomi, Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Denise Harvey and Jon A. George, who drummed and sang a prayer song and gave the invocation to open the ceremony.

The 31-acre property in the small eastern Multnomah County city of Wood Village was purchased by the Tribe on Friday, Dec. 11. The site, which was no longer being used for dog racing, was listed for sale at \$11.2 million by owner Arthur McFadden.

Konell Construction & Demolition Corp. of Sandy has been abating asbestos and lead and removing outbuildings, such as kennels, since mid-April. Now the main structure, a four-story grandstand, is set to come down.

During the demolition ceremony, it was announced that the grandstands will come down in early July.

"Historically, this was a vital economic engine that drove Wood Village," said City Administrator Bill Peterson. "At one point, this was Oregon's single largest attraction. It's an amazing part of our history and the importance of being able to replace that with an equivalent kind of attraction is just critical to

our future."

Peterson said the city's dealings with the Tribe have been great. "Relationships have been magnificent," he said.

The property is zoned Town Center, which allows for a variety of potential uses including a regional entertainment facility, commercial retail, housing and office buildings.

Grand Ronde Tribal members are familiar with the site since it was identified as the possible location for Oregon's first privately operated casino by two Lake Oswego businessmen who sponsored statewide ballot measures in 2010 and 2012 to build a private casino at the former racetrack.

Oregon Tribes successfully com-

bated both measures and Oregon voters overwhelmingly rejected the idea of private casinos in the state during the November 2012 election.

Wood Village is located within the historic homelands of the Cascade and Clackamas Chinook Tribes, which confederated to Grand Ronde in the 19th century. The Tribes ceded the area to the federal government in the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855.

Multnomah Greyhound Park opened in 1957 and closed in 2004. In its heyday, the Greyhound Park attracted more than 611,000 spectators in 1987, helping make Wood Village the "Home of Greyhound Racing" in Oregon.

The property joins the Portland Area Office on Southwest Barbur Boulevard as Tribal holdings in Multnomah County.

Tribal staff who attended the demolition ceremony included Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin, Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark, Tribal Attorney Rob Greene, Senior Staff Attorney Jennifer Biesack, Economic Development Administrative Assistant Meghan Zimbrick, Finance Officer Chris Leno, Tribal Engineering and Public Works Manager Jesse White and many others. Tribal Elder and former Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg also attended.

White said it will still be several months before the site is shovel ready for a new development and that construction probably would not start until summer 2017 at the earliest.

"This is a great day and this is a great turnout," Leno said. "For you people who live here and drive by this, this day will mark the start of the teardown. For us, it is the first day of the vision of what we will see built here. ... We didn't just come here. We are actually returning here. This is the ceded lands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. There are lots of villages right here that our people walked. We are returning to a place where our ancestors have always been."

After the ceremony, Tribal Council members and Tribal staff donned hardhats and toured the interior of the grandstand building and participated in a symbolic tearing down of the grandstand structure. ■

Kick the Habit.
Call these numbers for free from anywhere in Oregon:
1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)
Español: 1-877-2NO-FUME (1-877-266-3863)
TTY: 1-877-777-6534
Or register online at: www.quitnow.net/oregon/

DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services