

Tribal Council approves 2017 budget

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

In its final meeting of 2016, Tribal Council approved the 2017 budget that prepares for the anticipated financial effects from the opening of a Cowlitz Tribal casino in southwestern Washington state and also approved changes to ordinances that will open Tribal records to Tribal member review and established by law an independent press free of political control.

The approved 2017 budget includes a 38.8 percent projected decrease in gaming dividend from Spirit Mountain Casino, but the real effect of the Cowlitz casino will not be known until April or May when it is scheduled to open.

However, total projected revenues in the budget only decreased 5.5 percent because of carrying forward gaming dividend that was made by Spirit Mountain Casino in 2016 but not spent.

In addition, all Tribal governmental departments were asked to decrease their 2017 budget requests by at least 5 percent from 2016.

The budget was reviewed during the November 2016 General Council meeting and Tribal members had until Dec. 5 to submit their comments.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno said he thinks the budget is

good and thanked Tribal staff for their hard work in preparing it.

The approved amendments to the Public Records Ordinance will declassify certain Tribal records after 15 years and make them available for Tribal member review. However, Tribal Council will have the ability to add an additional 15-year waiting period to sensitive, confidential documents.

According to the Tribal Attorney's Office, no Tribal member comments were received regarding the amendments.

However, the proposed Independent Tribal Press Ordinance received 20 comments and 15 were in favor of the new ordinance, Tribal Attorney Rob Greene said during the Dec. 20 Legislative Action Committee meeting.

The new ordinance establishes a free and independent press and ensures *Smoke Signals* has the independence to report Tribal news objectively.

The new ordinance will establish an Editorial Board, which will supervise the editor of *Smoke Signals*. Currently, the Tribe's Publications Coordinator reports to the Tribal Council Chief of Staff, who is a direct report to Tribal Council.

The Editorial Board, according to the ordinance, will consist of between three to five members with a majority being Grand Ronde Tribal

members. Current Tribal employees are allowed to serve on the Editorial Board, but a majority of the board must be non-employees.

"Freedom of the press was guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution when this country was founded," said Tribal Council member Chris Mercier during the Dec. 20 LAC meeting. "If you go way back, it has always been a fundamental right of American citizens, and I think protection against undue political influence on our Tribal newsletter ... I think that when people approved our Tribal Constitution in 1984 they included language for freedom of the press. I do believe that this is what they had in mind."

The ordinance will become effective 21 days after adoption.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved the use of a Tribal credit card for Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe to use as a method of payment for business travel, training and access to vendors, as well as to pay for clinic supplies and food from vendors who do not accept purchase orders;
- Approved a resolution to ask the U.S. Department of the Interior to take the 25.5-acre Kilchis Point property in Tillamook County into trust for the benefit of the Tribe;
- Approved a utility easement to Tillamook People's Utility District

to bring power to the 44-acre Upper Nestucca property owned by the Tribe to provide electricity to a Coastcom repeater station. The Tribe will receive an additional \$10,000 from Coastcom for the utility easement;

- Approved a third 2016 supplemental budget appropriation of \$697,000 for the purchase price of the Cole Creek property and earnest money for the Fairview and Wolf Creek properties;
- Approved a \$204,996 referenced funding agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to fund fiscal year 2017 Tribal Transportation Program activities;
- Approved the enrollment of nine people into the Tribe because they meet the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance;
- And approved the agenda for the Jan. 8 General Council meeting to be held in the Tribal Community Center at 11 a.m. The agenda includes results of the Elders Committee election.

Tribal Lands Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach performed the cultural drumming and singing to open the meeting.

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



Newberg-Dundee

BYPASS PROJECT

To the communities of Newberg and Dundee Thank you for your patience

The construction of the Newberg-Dundee bypass has been noisy, dusty, sometimes inconvenient—yet on schedule.

Good things come to those who wait. Phase I of the new road is scheduled to open by the end of 2017, with immediate benefits to traffic congestion and safety in your community. With one more year of construction to go, you will notice more work along the new road and on Springbrook Road, OR99W, and OR219.

**Wishing you and your family
safe travels in the new year.**

- ⚠ Lane striping, traffic signals, covered signs, and new lanes are taking shape but are not open for use.
- ⚠ Please watch for barricades, cones, signs, and flaggers and always travel with caution through workzones.



**Oregon
Department
of Transportation**

For construction updates
and more information about
the project, visit newbergdundee.org