

General Council becomes TERO informational meeting

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

EUGENE – Maybe it was the general despondency throughout the state regarding the previous night’s loss by the University of Oregon Ducks in the Final Four.

Or perhaps it was a sunny day with highs approaching 60 degrees after what has been a long, cold and rainy winter.

Or, more likely, it was a combination of both.

Whatever the reason, the Sunday, April 2, General Council meeting held at the Valley River Inn in Eugene failed to reach quorum, which is 30 Tribal members per the Tribal Constitution.

General Council was just one Tribal member short of quorum, but after reaching the 11:15 a.m. deadline and still only having 29 Tribal members in attendance, Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George was forced to cancel the regular meeting per Tribal ordinance. However, the planned program proceeded as an informational session for the members who did attend.

Tribal Employment Rights Office Interim Director John Mercier presented a 30-minute overview of the TERO program.

“TEROs were started by a group of people that were very concerned about employment on Indian Reservations,” Mercier said. “TEROs are nothing new. There are 300 TEROs nationwide. In comparison, the Grand Ronde TERO is relatively new.”

Mercier said the Grand Ronde Tribe previously practiced Tribal preference in hiring with relatively weak results. He said that after 30 years of development of the Tribal campus, as well as Spirit Mountain Casino, Tribal preference “created



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Tribal Employment Rights Office Interim Director John Mercier discusses the Tribe’s TERO program during an informational session held Sunday, April 2, at the Valley River Inn in Eugene. Since a quorum of 30 Tribal members was not attained, the regularly scheduled General Council meeting was canceled and the agenda proceeded as an informational session only.

only minimal employment opportunities” for Tribal members.

“The Tribe wanted improved employment opportunities for Tribal members who wanted jobs,” Mercier said. “It was as simple as that: People wanted jobs. So Grand Ronde started building a TERO.”

Tribal Council approved the Grand Ronde TERO Ordinance in November 2013 to ensure that Tribal members have a chance to participate in economic activity on or near the Reservation.

The ordinance was enacted to address unemployment or underemployment near the Reservation, to eliminate barriers Tribal members face while seeking employment and to ensure the legal structure is in place so that Tribal members receive their rightful entitlements under the concept of Indian preference.

Mercier said the newly appointed TERO Commission, which over-

sees the TERO program, includes Chairman Russell Wilkinson, Vice Chair Diana George, Secretary Wink Soderberg and member Camille Mercier. There remains one vacancy on the commission.

There are currently 317 Tribal members in the Grand Ronde TERO Skills Bank who represent 34 different Native American Tribes. Mercier said that TERO’s goal is to see between 10 percent to 20 percent Tribal employment on covered projects within its jurisdiction.

The Tribe also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Oregon Department of Transportation that runs from January 2014 through January 2019 that permits the Tribe to enforce Indian preference in hiring on federally funded road construction projects within a 60-mile radius of the Reservation.

“Our employees in TERO are hired as employees of the contrac-

tors, not employees of the Tribe,” Mercier said. “They go onto the contractors’ payroll. They must be paid the same as other employees and must receive benefits.”

However, Mercier said, employees must adhere to company policies. “It’s a two-way street,” he said. “We’re making a preference in hiring, but that doesn’t give TERO workers an entitlement that they have preference in treatment.”

TERO also offers training opportunities, such as the March 30 traffic control flagger certification held in the Employment Services Center in Grand Ronde that had 20 participants.

Mercier said that Grand Ronde is one of three Oregon Tribes with a TERO agreement with the state Department of Transportation. He suggested that any Eugene-area Tribal members with appropriate job skills sign up for the Skills Bank.

Anyone with questions regarding TERO can contact the Tribal office at tero@grandronde.org.

In other action, it was announced that the next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, May 7, at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde.

Debi Anderson, Clifford Olson and Lisa Crawford won the \$100 door prizes while Monty Parazoo, Wilkinson, Tracie Meyer, Esther Lagoy and Celia Randolph won the \$50 door prizes. In addition, five turkey and/or ham certificates and two necklaces made by George were raffled off.

After lunch, approximately 15 Tribal members remained to participate in the final community input meeting regarding possible advisory votes that may be held in the future. ■

Name changes in Tribal Court

Tribal Court provides both minor and adult name changes to enrolled members for a filing fee of only \$30.

If you have any questions or would like to request a packet, contact Tribal Court at 503-879-2303. ■

Elders' Honor Day
Monday, July 10, 2017

THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE

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18, 19, 20, **21!** are you ready?

Minors' Trust Fund Preparing for 21!!
Community Meeting
Dinner – Raffle - Conversation

What:
Community meeting to talk about the Minors' Trust Fund (“21 Money”)

When/Where:
April 25, 2017 - 5:30 p.m.
West Salem Roth's - Oregon Room
1130 Wallace Rd NW, Salem, OR
April 26, 2017 - 5:30 p.m.
University of Oregon - Many Nations Longhouse
1630 Columbia Street, Eugene, OR

Why:
To hear from Tribal members and family about how the Trust “21 Money” is helping, benefiting, being used and how it can be improved.

Who:
Enrolled Grand Ronde Tribal members, parents and guardians and families 18 years of age and older.

For more information call 503-879-2275 or 503-879-2165

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