

Community Input meeting attracts about 100 attendees

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribe's annual Community Input meeting held on Wednesday, May 31, in the Tribal gym in Grand Ronde was more popular than it has ever been.

Planning and Grants Manager Kim Rogers hosted the evening event and said that almost twice as many Tribal members participated than in years past.

"We want it to be productive and we find this format a way to get people involved when they come," Rogers said. "We had about 100 people at the meeting with over 54 attendees beyond the assigned staff and the council members that attended. That is our best attendance for this annual event."

Dinner began after 6 p.m. when Cultural Resources employee Bobby Mercier led a group of community members in a traditional welcome song. He was joined by Jordan Mercier, Leslie Riggs, Chris Bailey, Tammy Fisher, Izaiah Fisher, Jacob Holmes, Nokoa Mercier, Kyoni Mercier, Kaikanim Mercier, Leah Pratt, Kim Contreras and Kim Roybal.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Cheryl A. Kennedy, Secretary Jon A. George and Tribal Council members Brenda Tuomi, Denise Harvey, Kathleen George, Tonya Gleason-Shepek and Chris Mercier attended.

Rogers discussed the process for the meeting and introduced a PowerPoint presentation that explained how Tribal programs use information gathered at Community Input meetings.

Rogers said that receiving community input is required for some grants the Tribe receives and that other grants only suggest community evaluation in response.



"This is really a good opportunity to get a lot of feedback in a short amount of time. I think that is really helpful for us because we really want to – within the scope of responsible management – tailor this program to the needs of Tribal members."

~ Tribal Wildlife Biologist Lindsay Belonga

Rogers said 19 Tribal programs were represented at the Community Input meeting and that each program had staff in attendance to answer questions and stamp a member's passport.

Each Tribal member was given an open house passport paper when they signed in at the registration table. For every five program tables visited, members received an entry into a raffle drawing.

The Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center table shared information about the second-phase construction project currently occurring. Floor plan drawings were provided so that people could envision what the building will look like upon completion.

Newly licensed drone pilot Alex Drake explained how the Tribe's latest technology application is helping with necessary mapping and aerial images.

Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight staffed a table of officers and passed out information about the Tribal Police Department.

McKnight said he was attending his third Community Input meeting and that he uses the opportunity to meet face-to-face with members and hear their concerns about different situations in the community, as well as hear their pride in the new police station that opened on Grand Ronde Road earlier this year.

"My dad helped build this," said 11-year-old Leo Norwest pointing at pictures of the station. He is the son of Tribal members Kenny Laferty and Shannon Stanton.

McKnight said people often feel more at ease when approaching him and other Tribal police officers at community meetings than visiting the station. He said he hopes that will change in the future.

"We want to be responsive to the community," McKnight said. "And we want people to feel comfortable sharing their concerns with us because we listen and we care about what they care about."

Information about the Tribe's ceremonial fishing agreement at Willamette Falls and traditional lamprey harvest opportunities was shared and pictures and a video provided a better idea of the project's scope.

The Tribe's Health & Wellness Center staff had a large presence and Behavioral Health Director Jan Kaschmitter staffed a table that shared information about the new Behavioral Health addition project. She had floor plan drawings available for people to examine.

Tribal Wildlife Biologist Lindsay Belonga shared information with Tribal hunters about extra tags the Tribe now distributes to members for either an early or late hunting season each year.

"I'm trying to develop a baseline assessment of needs for hunting and fishing opportunities for Tribal members," Belonga said. "What I would like to do is develop this baseline assessment of what Tribal members want in terms of hunting seasons and hunting regulations. What I'm most interested in is what do they want to see out of that program within the scope of what we can do. Right now with the Tribal hunting tags, this will be the third year we issue Tribal tags to Tribal members."

Belonga said community input is important to her program and that

she hopes the meetings continue.

"It's one of the few times we get to interact with the community as a whole," Belonga said. "This is really a good opportunity to get a lot of feedback in a short amount of time. I think that is really helpful for us because we really want to – within the scope of responsible management – tailor this program to the needs of Tribal members."

Education Department staff members displayed floor plan drawings for the new preschool addition and another table provided information explaining changes coming to the Cherriots to Grand Ronde 2X bus transit service.

Tribal General Manager Dave Fullerton said transportation is an issue that previously came up at Community Input meetings multiple times. He said transportation is an example of Tribal leadership listening to the membership and responding directly.

"You could look at a lot of things," Fullerton said of a time when members voted on their most important issues by placing dots on a poster board. "You could look at our public transportation and you can go back to years of community meetings where transportation was listed as an issue. You can go back to the emphasis that council has put on housing. There are a lot of specific projects that came out of the Community Input meetings."

Fullerton said grant requirements requiring community response to Tribal programs is an important part of why Tribal leadership holds Community Input meetings.

"The other importance for community meetings is we need to have those for public input for some of our grant requirements," Fullerton said. "Some grants have public input as a requirement to the application process. You could look at a lot of things in programming that have come out of the public comment meetings."

Fullerton said Tribal leadership desires to do more than just listen to people because it's required for grant funding. He said it is considered a priority when planning a program's direction.

"It's a real good opportunity for membership to give input on what they see as priorities," Fullerton said. "We're creating opportunities for membership to give comment on what their priorities are." ■

Hoop for Health!

CTGR NATIVE YOUTH
3 ON 3
2017

When: August 18th-20th

Tournament times: **Friday, Aug. 18** | 5 p.m.- 8 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 19 | 8 a.m.- 9 p.m.
Sunday Aug. 20 | 8 a.m.- Until finished (If needed)

Who can play: Coed Middle school and High school brackets (teams of 4)
2016-2017 school year, must bring ID.

Where: 'Uyxat Pow Wow Grounds - Grand Ronde, Oregon

Cost: Free!

3 point contest | Prizes for 3 point contest, 1st, and 2nd place teams!

All teams must have a coach, 18 years or older | Limited Team spots available!

Presentation on healthy lifestyle awareness!

Deadline to Register Aug 11th

To register a team Contact Harris Reibach: 503-879-1369

Community Health Program

Medical Transport Services

Medical transportation services are available to Tribal members within the six-county service area when an alternate means of transportation is not available. Advance notice required.

Please call 503-879-2078 to schedule a reservation.