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UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

Interior approves amendments to gaming compact

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Amendments to the Grand Ronde Tribe's 2006 gaming compact with the state of Oregon that will allow Spirit Mountain Casino to offer games appealing to younger customers received official approval from the federal government on Wednesday, Dec. 13.

Tribal Council approved the amendments on Sept. 13 and then the proposed amendments were forwarded to the Department of the Interior for approval per provisions outlined in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act regarding Class III gaming.

The amendments include an update of the definition of "video lottery terminal" to broaden its meaning, which will allow Spirit Mountain Casino to offer more interactive slot machines as they change over time. Games that include an element of skill also will be allowed under the amendment.

"Hopefully this definition will not need to be amended in order to accomplish our obtaining those machines," Senior Staff Attorney Deneen Aubertin Keller said during the Sept. 12 Legislative Action Committee meeting.

Spirit Mountain Gaming Commission Executive Director Michael Boyce said during the Sept. 12 meeting that the new video lottery terminal definition will "allow for any game we could foresee in the future. It's a pretty wide-open definition. ... From what we can see in the future, this will allow the casino to offer those games."

The Tribal Attorney's Office has been working with the state to amend the compact for two years to deal with the changing technology, Tribal Attorney Rob Greene said in September.

Grand Ronde becomes the first Pacific Northwest Tribe to update its definition of a video lottery terminal to accommodate the new machines hitting the market that are not available in Washington state, giving Spirit Mountain Casino a potential edge in the Pacific Northwest.

"It's a real competitive advantage for us at this point in time," Greene said.

"I'm sure the other Tribes are going to greatly appreciate this because we have done all of the hard work," Tribal Council member Denise Harvey said. "Now this is something they can model, which will be much easier for them." ■



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier, fifth from right, helps Gov. Kate Brown, in front of Mercier, cut the ribbon during a ceremony held for Phase 1 of the Newberg-Dundee Bypass on Monday, Dec. 18. Also in the group of local and state representatives are Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, behind Mercier, and Tribal Council member Denise Harvey, third from left, and next to her is her granddaughter Hallie Brewer. The Tribe donated \$4 million to help fund the bypass project. Although it was the ribbon cutting ceremony, the bypass will not open for public use until Jan. 6, 2018.

Tribes help celebrate Newberg-Dundee Phase I

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

NEWBERG — The Newberg-Dundee Bypass's first phase is finally complete, thanks in part to a \$4 million donation made to the project by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Local, state and federal officials and Tribal Council members and staff gathered on the bypass on Monday, Dec. 18, to celebrate the completion of the project's first phase that is literally decades in the making. The first section of the bypass will officially open to traffic on Saturday, Jan. 6, but the ribbon cutting was held earlier due to the holidays.

The Tribal funds, originally designated in its gaming compact with the state to help build a new interchange at the convergence of state highways 18 and 22, helped Yamhill County and three of its city governments — Newberg, Dundee and McMinnville — fund their \$20 million share of Phase 1 of the project, which also included \$192 million from the state and \$45 million from the federal government.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier spent more than eight years as a representative on the Yamhill County Parkway

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Former Tribal leader 'Chips' Tom walks on



Leon "Chips" Tom

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Former Tribal Council member and Tribal Elder Leon Clinton "Chips" Tom, who many considered to be the face of the Grand Ronde Tribe because of his prominent role in a mid-2000s Spirit Mountain Community Fund billboard and TV ad campaign, walked on at the age of 89 on Sat-

urday, Dec. 16.

Tom was born on July 15, 1928, to Michael Clinton Tom and Cora (Voutrin) Tom in Grand Ronde. According to a *Smoke Signals* profile published in February 2007, he attended Grand Ronde Elementary and Willamina High schools, as well as Chemawa Indian School.

He lettered in three sports — baseball, basketball and football.

"Chips is arguably the finest athlete that ever attended Willamina High," said Rod Pedersen, who played with Tom at Willamina High from 1946-48.

In an April 2009 *Smoke Signals* story, Tom recalled playing baseball for the Grand Ronde Tribal

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