



**2013** – Tribal Council voted to disenroll 13 members for violating the dual enrollment provision of the Tribal Constitution. Seventeen other cases were sent back to the Tribal Enrollment Committee for re-examination. The meeting began with Tribal Council member Chris Mercier moving to suspend the process until the Tribe could find a way to help those facing disenrollment. The motion failed 5-4. Tribal Council Chair Reyn Leno said it was the current council’s duty to uphold the Tribal Constitution and clean up the Tribe’s enrollment files.

**2008** – Tribal member Kass Ritchey, 24, became a homeowner using the Tribe’s Down Payment Assistance Program. He approached the Housing Authority for assistance at the suggestion of his mother, and three months later was a homeowner. “I couldn’t have bought the house without the Tribe,” he said. Due to the program, homeownership has become a reality for many Tribal members. At the time, the program had issued almost 900 grants since its inception in 1990.

**2003** – The Hall of Legends opened at Spirit Mountain Casino and included 53 feet linking the casino with the lodge next door. The hall told the story of the Tribe. Elaine LaBonte, Tribal management mentee, organized the project by gathering ideas from staffers and the Tribe’s Cultural Resources Department. They gathered hundreds of artifacts, artwork and stories for the hall. “Our primary goal was to honor our ancestors and their stories,” LaBonte said. “It’s not our interpretation of history. It’s theirs.”



**2003** File photo

**1998** – The Tribe made a proposal to include certain Tribal properties as part of the federally recognized Reservation. If passed, the amended Grand Ronde Reservation Act would redefine the official status of seven parcels of land purchased after the Tribe was restored in 1983. The 191 acres, held in trust by the U.S. government, would officially become part of the Grand Ronde Reservation.

**1993** – Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts signed a gaming compact with Tribal officials, signifying the end of negotiations. It was the Tribe’s hope that the gaming facility would be in operation within a year, employ 600 people and offer a badly needed economic boost to the area. The gaming facility was to include a 1,000-seat bingo hall, video machines, keno and a buffet-style restaurant. Future plans included a hotel, golf course, retail space and other recreational amenities. Money generated from the gaming facility was to potentially be used to build a Tribal human services clinic and offices, as well as housing.

**1988** – The Tribe celebrated its fourth annual powwow with more than 1,300 attendees. “Our powwow gets bigger every year and we are indebted to all who helped prepare for our event,” Tribal Council Chairman Mark Mercier said. “Believe me, it takes a lot of careful planning and hard work to make an event of this magnitude a success.” He noted that a group of employees, Tribal Elders and community members had gathered weekly to make items for the Tribal giveaways, as well as those who volunteered to cook for the attendees.

*Yesteryears is a look back at Tribal history in five-year increments through the pages of Smoke Signals.*

## Police Department has non-emergency text line

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department has created a non-emergency text line.

“We learned in our last school meeting that kids would like a different way to communicate with the police if they have a non-emergency situation,” Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight said. “We all know kids love to text so my officers and I decided this would be a great tool to utilize.”

The new text number is 541-921-2927.

“Even though this is mostly designed for children, I don’t want adults thinking that they can’t use it as well. If you have a non-emergency situation or question, feel free to contact my officer via text through this line. When one of my officers receives the text, they will call you back when they have time.”

McKnight said that emergency situations still require people to call 911. For more information, contact McKnight at 503-879-1474. ■

# Tribe will market property itself

**WOOD VILLAGE**  
continued from front page

The Tribe purchased the property in December 2015. The dilapidated site, which had not been used for dog racing since 2004, was listed for sale at \$11.2 million. The Tribe purchased the property at less than listed value and will attempt to sell it for \$17.9 million.

In addition to the purchase price, the Tribe signed an almost \$900,000 contract with Konell Construction & Demolition Corp. of Sandy in April 2016 to demolish and clear structures on the site.

Engineering & Public Works Manager Jesse White said the Tribe added “substantial value” to the property in clearing the site and making it development ready, as well as working with the city to create a development master plan.

At the time of purchase, Tribal Council representatives led by then-Chairman Reyn Leno said the site would be developed to diversify the Tribe’s economy.

In June 2016, the Tribe held a well-attended event that featured the initial tearing down of the iconic glass-enclosed grandstand and the announcement of Spirit Mountain at Wood Village, a development that would be a mixture of lodging, entertainment and housing that would complement the Tribe’s casino in Grand Ronde.

Hernandez said one factor that convinced current Tribal Council members to sell the site was that the Tribe wants any investment to generate more than is currently being made in the Tribal portfolio.

“They looked a lot at the return on investment and the overall time frame for the recouping of any development costs, and they thought overall that it would be in the best interest to take advantage of the booming market to hopefully realize a profit,” Hernandez said.

“I think it’s a good move because I know what we hope to get and the amount of money we put in, and I think if we can get near to what we want it will end up being a pretty profitable investment,” Mercier said before meeting with the Wood Village City Council. “We’ve met with developers and looked a schematics for an entertainment center, a brew pub, retail and all that, and it could be profitable, but it would just take a while before it became profitable. It would just take too long for our tastes. This is an opportunity perhaps best in the hands of someone else.”

Grand Ronde Tribal members became keenly aware of the moribund property east of Portland when two Lake Oswego businessmen identified it as the possible location for Oregon’s first privately operated casino. Oregon Tribes successfully rebuffed two attempts to change the state Constitution in 2010 and ’12 that would have allowed a private casino at the former racetrack.

For the city’s part, Mayor Tim-

othy Clark said in the prepared press release that it “appreciates the relationship that we have developed with the Grand Ronde Tribe over the past three years and look forward to continuing that partnership through cultural celebration and recognition of the Tribe’s history in the area.”

To maximize profit, the Tribe will market the property itself with Tribal Lands Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach heading the effort. He can be contacted at 503-879-2394 or Lands@grandronde.org.

Reibach said selling the property is a “good strategic move” for the Tribe.

### Tribal briefing

A briefing for the Tribal membership held at 6 p.m. in the Employment Services Building on the Tribal campus attracted 31 Tribal members and spouses.

Tribal Council members Brenda Tuomi, Michael Langley and Kathleen George attended, as did Hernandez and Deputy Press Secretary Sara Thompson.

The meeting ran almost 90 minutes and at times a few audience members became so rancorous that Tribal police were called and children were ushered from the room.

“One of the options always on the table was to dispose of the property,” Hernandez said. “Timing is a big factor here and we want to maximize the profit.”

Some Tribal members questioned why the meeting was being held when it had already been announced earlier in the day that the property was for sale.

Hernandez said that state public meeting laws required Wood Village to notify its local media, which sent a reporter to attend the meeting held earlier between the Tribe and City Council.

“We had hoped to inform the membership first, but unfortunately it didn’t work out that way,” Hernandez said.

Shawn Hostler-Jones said selling the property puts the Tribe into an asset management position instead of economic development.

“An opportunity is getting sold for a pot of money,” she said.

Tiny Gibbons said she was glad an informational meeting was being held.

“You’re definitely trying to get the membership’s input,” she said. “I appreciate this.”

Leno voted to approve the Greyhound Park property purchase when he was chairman. At the time, Tribal Council hoped to develop a business plan for the property that would help diversify the Tribe’s economic base, he said.

“I think you could almost treat this (sale) as a settlement and a part could be dispensed to the membership,” he said.

Frank Hostler II said council’s

**See WOOD VILLAGE**  
continued on page 7