

# Tribal Council moves forward with Blue Heron Paper Mill purchase

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is another step closer to owning land near Willamette Falls for the first time in more than 160 years after a series of 4-3 votes on Wednesday, July 10, that instructed the Lands Department to move forward with purchase and sale agreements on two properties that include the shuttered 23-acre Blue Heron Paper Mill site.

In addition, Tribal Council approved a more than \$17 million supplemental budget for 2019 to fund the purchase of the two properties.

The properties include the Blue Heron site and approximately 1.5 miles of land that borders the site and Willamette River and features a potential boat dock. The two properties are owned by different people.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Mercier and Tribal Council members Steve Bobb Sr. and Jack Giffen Jr. dissented. Tribal Council member Lisa Leno was absent.

Finance Officer Chris Leno said he received 26 written comments regarding the proposed purchases from the membership and they were all supportive.

During the supplemental budget hearing, former Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno called the purchase “one of the worst decisions the Tribe will ever make.” He also asked why the Tribe is not investing the money in Grand Ronde for Elders, education and veterans.

Tribal Elder Les Houck also said he was “totally against” the purchase. “I don’t think it’s a blessing for the Tribe, but a curse,” he said.

Tribal Elder Maxine Rock, however, called the site “sacred” and said the Tribe needs to purchase the property.

Tribal Elder Debi Anderson said she supports the purchase, calling it a “marvelous” opportunity for the Tribe to open Willamette Falls to the public.

According to a four-page frequently asked questions sheet distributed by Tribal Council before the meeting, “The Blue Heron property is a significant purchase that provides us with long-term investment opportunities while being a cultural site with significant cultural and historical connections for our Tribe and our Tribal community.

“An initial highest and best use analysis identified a mixed-use development, but the Tribe is in the process of doing a full highest and best use study for the site.”

Funds for the purchase will come from the Gaming Dividend Fund, which will be replenished with the future sale of the Multnomah Greyhound Park site in Wood Village. The Tribe purchased the Wood Village site for approximately \$10 million in December 2015 and cleared the site of the dilapidated racetrack stands.

Vice Chair Chris Mercier said he voted against the purchases because of “sticker shock” while other Tribal

Council members, such as Kathleen George, Denise Harvey and Michael Langley, praised the long-term investment that they think will likely make money for the Tribe, as well as the cultural component of regaining ownership of the land.

Tribal Council approval occurred one week before the state Department of Environmental Quality will hold a July 17 public comment meeting in Oregon City regarding a Prospective Purchaser Agreement that would shield the Tribe from legal liability while it works to clean up any environmental damage found at the Blue Heron site, which has a long history of industrial usage.

“The reinvestment of the Grand Ronde Tribe is a reinvestment into the environment. It’s a reinvestment into improving water quality, rebuilding lamprey populations and restoring habitat,” the frequently asked questions sheet stated.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved a resolution that supports the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board to “identify area-wide functions currently performed by the Indian Health Service, or that are not being performed, that could and/or should be performed by the board on behalf of the Tribes and to negotiate within the scope of work and budget of the contract so identified”;
- Approved a lease with Spirit Mountain Casino that will allow the casino to pave an almost one-acre piece of property that used to house the Tribal police station and use it for parking;
- And approved the enrollment of 13 noninfants and six infants into the Tribe because they meet the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

Also included in the July 10 Tribal Council packet was an authorization to proceed that increased the Tribe’s minimum wage to \$11.25 per hour to match rates offered by the state of Oregon. The Tribal minimum wage will increase to \$12 an hour on July 1, 2020; \$12.75 an hour on July 1, 2021; and \$13.50 an hour on July 1, 2022.

Acting Cultural Resources Department Manager Briece Edwards gave the cultural presentation to open the meeting about the Tribe’s historical connection to the Willamette Falls area and the archaeological finds that have been discovered at the Blue Heron site, including the original woolen mill foundation.

“Our people were the resident Tribes of the area,” Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy said. “They were the safeguarders of the falls.”

The entire meeting can be viewed by visiting the Tribal government’s official website at [www.grandronde.org](http://www.grandronde.org) and clicking on the News tab and then Video. ■

# Mooney chosen as first Junior Hatfield Fellow

By Danielle Frost

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

In an effort to build recognition and awareness of the Hatfield Fellowship program among Tribal youth, a Junior Hatfield internship was recently developed to help them learn about the political process at the Tribal and state levels.

“The program is designed to give youth a glimpse of what a career in public service would entail and hopefully prep them for a future Hatfield Fellowship in Washington, D.C.,” said Angela Sears, Spirit Mountain Community Fund program coordinator.

The Community Fund oversees the fellowship.

After an application and interview process, Willamina High School junior Amaryssa Mooney was named the 2019 Junior Hatfield Fellow.

She began her internship in late June, working with Tribal Council staff to learn more about the day-to-day responsibilities of Tribal Council members. In a few weeks, Mooney will transition to Salem to intern in a yet-to-be named state representative’s office and will work there through late August.

Mooney, 16, applied for the fellowship so she could learn more about Tribal government.

“I’ve always had an interest in politics and want to find out more about how it works,” she said. “I like getting to know the people here and I want to improve on my public speaking ability.”

So far, Mooney has spent most of her time assisting Tribal Council staff and attending meetings.

The junior fellow program is open to Tribal youth who are at least a sophomore in high school through a senior in college.

“The idea is to give them an opportunity to experience working with local government agencies and our Tribal government to determine if this is something they’d like to explore more in the future,” Sears said. “They’re able to make valuable connections with staff members, ask questions and get firsthand information about what it takes to pursue this type of career. This experience can help



**Amaryssa Mooney**

them determine what path they want to take in college and beyond.”

Sears added that Mooney was selected because she showed “great potential.”

“She had an interest in the Hatfield Fellowship and was eager to learn about the political process at the state and Tribal level,” she said.

During her internship, Mooney said her main objective is to learn more about politics and to be selected for the Hatfield Fellowship program in Washington, D.C.

“I was excited to be selected for this and have enjoyed getting to know council members and see what they do on a daily basis,” she said.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde established the Mark O. Hatfield Fellowship in 1998 as a living tribute to the late senator. The internship lasts for nine months as fellows learn the inner workings of the federal government and serve as advisers on Native American issues.

Past fellows have served in several congressional offices over the years, including the offices of senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, and representatives Darlene Hooley, Earl Blumenauer, Greg Walden, Kurt Schrader, David Wu and Suzanne Bonamici.

Some notable Grand Ronde Hatfield Fellows include current Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest Regional Director Bryan Mercier and Grand Ronde Food Bank Coordinator Francene Ambrose.

Mooney is the daughter of Daniel Mooney and Katherine Madoris.

In her spare time, she enjoys playing summer league softball. At school, Mooney is a member of the National Honor Society, as well as a softball and volleyball player. She hopes to attend Western Oregon University and become a math teacher. ■

## WIC visits Community Center monthly

Pregnant? Breastfeeding? Does your family include a child under the age of 5? If so, you may qualify for the Women, Infants and Children program. With WIC, people can receive answers to nutritional questions and access fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, milk, cheese, juice, cereal and more.

A WIC representative visits the Tribal Community Center on the third Tuesday of the month, which will be July 16.

Walk-ins are welcome between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 503-879-2034. ■