

Little indicted for felony theft from Elders' fund

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Former Elders Committee Treasurer Julie Ann Little is scheduled to return to Polk County Circuit Court on Thursday, Dec. 19, to possibly change her not guilty plea to two charges of first-degree theft.

Little, 64, was indicted on two counts of first-degree theft by a Polk County grand jury on Oct. 29 after the grand jury heard testimony from Elders Committee Chairwoman Penny DeLoe and Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department Sgt. Rod McAllister.

The charges stem from Little allegedly stealing a \$1,000 or more on two separate occasions from the Elders Committee fund – one that occurred between March 8 and July 11 and another that occurred between July 15 and July 31.

“The defendant ... did unlawfully and knowingly commit theft of money, of the value of \$1,000 or more, the property of Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde,” both felony counts state.

The indictment states that she allegedly spent the money in Yamhill, Polk and Tillamook counties.

Little was elected to the Elders Committee during the December 2018 election and resigned when the allegations against her surfaced.

She was cited and released by McAllister on Sept. 26.

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department declined to release Little's arrest report to *Smoke Signals*, citing that the Polk County District Attorney's Office is not finished

with the case. She is being prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Kyle Haney.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Alicia Eagan said that first-degree theft charges generally receive sentences from between probation to five years maximum depending on a defendant's criminal history.

“Last I heard they were working on a deal, but I didn't hear if she took it,” said Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight in an e-mail.

Elders Committee Secretary-Treasurer Julie Duncan said that the Elders bank account decreased from approximately \$7,400 to \$58 during the first three months after Little took over as treasurer.

Duncan said she and Little were the only Elders Committee members with access to the funds, which were raised through bingo nights, fundraisers and other events to help pay for Elders activities and trips.

Duncan added that the Elders Committee voted to pursue legal action against Little. “It wasn't just one person's decision,” she said.

Duncan said the Tribe has reimbursed the Elders Committee the missing funds and Elders funds are now being funneled through the Finance Office to prevent a similar occurrence.

Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez said she was unable to comment on the specifics of the case.

Little, who lives in Dallas, is represented by Salem attorney Arthur B. Cummins. She declined to comment on her case when contacted by *Smoke Signals*. ■

Grand Ronde Editorial Board position openings

The Grand Ronde Editorial Board, a Tribal board assigned the duty by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (“Grand Ronde”) of overseeing its independent Tribal press (*Smoke Signals*), invites applications to serve on the Grand Ronde Editorial Board. There are two open board positions occurring in March 2020.

The five-member Grand Ronde Editorial Board is responsible to the Grand Ronde Tribal Council. It oversees the editor of *Smoke Signals* to ensure the independent Tribal press reports news free from any undue influence and free from any political interest, and that Tribal news employees adhere to the highest ethical journalistic standards.

The Editorial Board meets monthly. From time to time, additional special meetings may be held. Board members are expected to attend all meetings in person, although participation by telephone or video will be permitted. Each board member receives a monthly stipend for attending meetings. Travel reimbursement is limited to travel within the six counties of Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Tillamook, Multnomah and Washington.

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Preference will be given to qualified Tribal members.

Submission deadline: Friday, Jan. 10, 2020

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c/o Smoke Signals

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