



COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL EVENT BOARD VACANCIES

The following Committees and Special Event Boards have vacant positions.

- Grand Ronde Editorial Board – 1 vacancy**
- Housing Grievance Board – 1 vacancy**
- Ceremonial Hunting Board – 2 vacancies**
- Culture Committee – 2 vacancies**
- Enrollment Committee – 2 vacancies**
- Fish & Wildlife Committee – 3 vacancies**
- Powwow Special Event Board – 1 vacancy**

Please send completed applications to
Stacia Hernandez, 9615 Grand Ronde Road,
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

Tribe holds first Candidates' Forum via the Internet

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council challenger Reyn Leno was in Billings, Mont., visiting his new great-granddaughter, but it didn't prevent him from participating in the annual Tribal Council Candidates' Forum.

For the first time ever, the Tribe held the forum using the Zoom teleconferencing program because of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the need to not hold large inside gatherings.

Starting at 5 p.m. Wednesday, July 22, Reyn Leno joined Tribal Council incumbents Chris Mercier, Lisa Leno and Michael Langley, and fellow challenger Peter Grout for the 90-minute forum that fluctuated between 30 to 35 viewers.

General Manager David Fullerton handled moderator duties and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez watched the clock to ensure candidates did not go over their allotted time.

After opening statements by Lisa Leno, Langley, Grout, Reyn Leno and Mercier, each candidate had two minutes to answer two prepared questions: What would your priority be in your first 30 days on Tribal Council and what are the strengths and/or gaps you see in the current Tribal government?

After answering those questions, Fullerton asked four questions submitted by viewers and each candidate had 90 seconds to answer.

Viewer questions asked candidates what they thought of developing businesses in Grand Ronde, how to attain enrollment justice for those negatively affected by the 1999 constitutional amendment,

what issue affecting the Tribe is not getting enough attention and how would they continue to work on improving and/or repairing the Grand Ronde Tribe's relationships with other Oregon Tribes?

Although candidates had the option to opt out of answering any of the viewer questions, each candidate weighed in on each topic.

Following the questions, each candidate was allotted two minutes to make a closing statement.

"Overall, I'd rate it an enjoyable experience," Mercier said about the virtual forum. "There did not seem to be many, if any, technical glitches. While 90 minutes, that seemed to fly by quickly.

"My only gripe is the 90-second response time never seemed enough, and my answers were hurried and incomplete at times. I'd say two minutes is better."

This year's field of five candidates is the smallest ever since the Tribe's Restoration in 1983. Election Day is Saturday, Sept. 12.

Mercier is seeking his sixth term on Tribal Council while Langley and Lisa Leno are seeking their second terms. Reyn Leno previously served seven consecutive three-year terms on council and Grout is seeking his first term.

The Candidates' Forum was recorded and will be posted at www.grandronde.org under the Government tab and then Videos.

Tribal voters also can read candidate statements in the July *Tilixam Wawa* that was mailed out in late July and listen to *Smoke Signals'* podcast interviews with each candidate at www.spreaker.com. ■

Grand Ronde still has no local positive COVID-19 cases

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

Since the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic hit Oregon in March, the Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center has conducted 338 tests. Of those, 335 have been negative.

The three that resulted in positive re-tests were for individuals who live outside the community.

On Wednesday, July 8, voluntary employee testing began. All 32 tests were negative. Next, the clinic began conducting antibody tests. Of 72 tests, 51 were negative and 21 are awaiting results.

"We are doing this to help identify people without symptoms who have had the virus," Executive Director of Health Services Kelly Rowe said. "It helps track pockets of infection in the community and see if people are having underlying health conditions related to COVID-19."

Antibody tests help patients understand if they have been previously exposed to the virus and help public health officials with virus tracking.

Rowe discussed these topics during the Grand Ronde Tribe's 10th Facebook Live event held on Wednesday, July 22. Also attending were Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, Vice Chair Chris Mercier and Tribal Council members Michael Langley and Lisa Leno. Other staff in attendance included General Manager David Fullerton, Finance Officer Chris Leno and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez.

Rowe also announced relatives could begin visiting the Tribe's Adult Foster Care residents after the Oregon Health Authority authorized the Tribe's outdoor visitation plan. Masks and hand sanitizer are being provided for friends and family who want to visit.

"Isolation can really impact your entire health," Rowe said. "If you're in a vulnerable population, it compounds that."

Fullerton announced that there is assistance for those who need help with rent, mortgage or

paying utilities. Additionally, the Tribe plans to start a child care stipend program in the fall, the details of which are pending.

Mercier spoke about a pending Tribal member loan program, which would potentially include loans of up to \$5,000, but likely begin at \$1,000.

"We're probably going to start slow," he said. "If people demonstrate the ability to pay it back, we may increase the eligible amount."

The loan program is to help deter cash-strapped Tribal members from using payday loan companies, which often charge exorbitant fees and high interest rates.


"We will need to determine the terms, interest rates, late fees, and age and income requirements," Mercier said. "We're on the way to producing something."

Lisa Leno discussed the five advisory vote questions to be placed on the upcoming ballot. For the fourth year in a row, Tribal voters will be asked their opinions on various topics when they cast their ballots for Tribal Council during the Sept. 12 election.

The questions include whether to move forward with a constitutional amendment removing parent on the roll at the time of birth as a requirement for enrollment, whether to build a walking path from the Grand Meadows mobile home subdivision to Spirit Mountain Casino, whether to increase the Tribe's investment in environmental stewardship, whether to allow electronic voting and whether to evaluate establishing a child care center in Grand Ronde.

"We're really excited about these and want to thank the members for showing up to our community meetings to have these discussions, as well as people who e-mailed and sent in ideas," Leno said. "It's an opportunity for the membership to use their voice."

About 160 people logged in to watch the Facebook Live event. ■



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