

First COVID-19 vaccine doses arrived in Oregon in December

**VACCINE continued
from front page**

reaching out to first responders.”

The Tribe is coordinating with the Oregon Health Authority for vaccination delivery. Those who receive first doses need to have the follow-up dose 28 days later.

Rowe advised anyone with questions about vaccination to visit the Tribe's COVID-19 web page at www.grandronde.org or the Tribe's Facebook Page.

“Please do not call the clinic because it ties up the line for people who are trying to get in for COVID testing,” she said. “We will announce updates as prolifically as possible. We have gotten the vaccine, and we will continue to get it.”

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla's Yellowhawk Health Center was among the first medical facilities in Oregon to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

The Umatilla Tribe has had approximately 8 percent of its COVID-19 tests come back positive since the pandemic hit. The



Photo courtesy of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe was one of the first Tribal employees to receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccination on Wednesday, Dec. 23. The Tribe has received its first 200 doses that will be administered initially to frontline health workers, first responders and the most vulnerable population, such as Elders, at the Tribe.

state average is approximately 5.8 percent.

The Umatilla Reservation also is surrounded by Oregon's Umatilla

and Union counties, which have had some of the worst virus outbreaks in the state, according to a recent Oregon Public Broadcasting article.

In order to store the vaccine, which requires ultra-low temperatures, the Umatilla Tribe procured a freezer that was previously used to keep lamprey specimens for study. The Moderna vaccine can be stored at regular refrigeration temperatures.

Grand Ronde's Health & Wellness Center coronavirus cases are below the state average, with approximately 3.2 percent of tests coming back positive.

The first COVID-19 vaccine doses arrived in Oregon on Monday, Dec. 14, and Legacy Health was the first registered vaccine provider in the state to receive them. Sites in Portland and Tualatin each took delivery of one package of 975 doses, according to a press release from the Oregon Health Authority.

Additional doses were expected at three other locations in Oregon on Tuesday, Dec. 15: Oregon Health & Science University Pharmacy, a Kaiser Permanente site in Portland and St. Alphonsus Medical Center in Ontario.

The remaining 30,225 vaccine doses from Oregon's first-week allocation arrived at hospitals throughout the rest of the week, with 10,725 of the doses going to nursing facilities. Approximately 10,407 people were vaccinated during the first week, according to the Health Authority.

The federal Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention asked Oregon to choose the sites as a way to test the ordering system.

The long-anticipated vaccine shipments followed a U.S. Food and Drug Administration decision on Friday, Dec. 11, to issue an emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. It was found in clinical trials to have a 95 percent effective rate, and only cause mild to moderate short-term side effects.

“In recent weeks, as COVID-19 vaccines reached the final stages of approval, I have said time and again that hope is on the way,” Gov. Kate Brown said. “Today, I can tell you that help is here.”

Vaccinations will be prioritized, starting with frontline health care workers and long-term care facility residents who are among the most vulnerable.

“Throughout the process, we will work to ensure that the Oregonians that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including those from Black, Indigenous, Latino/Latina/Latinx, Pacific Islander and Tribal communities, have equitable access to vaccination,” Brown said.

Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen said that vaccinations against COVID-19 are still months away for most Oregonians, so prevention measures such as wearing masks, physical distancing, avoiding gatherings and staying home if sick must continue.

The vaccine manufactured by Moderna Inc. received FDA emergency use authorization on Friday, Dec. 18. The Moderna vaccine has been found to be approximately 94 percent effective with minimal side effects.

Public health officials estimate there will be enough of the two vaccines to provide first doses to about 100,000 people, with second doses administered in January. People will need to follow public health protocols between the two doses and up to several weeks following the second dose as their bodies build up resistance to the virus.

Essential workers, followed by people with underlying health conditions and those older than 65 are next in line as they are identified by the Oregon Health Authority's Vaccine Advisory Committee.

Priority groups in Phase 2 will be determined at a later date, and the general population isn't expected to be eligible for vaccination until spring. ■

Tribal Council OKs contract to design language building

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

In its final meeting of 2020, Tribal Council approved a design contract for the new language building during its Dec. 30 meeting.

MCA Architects of Portland was the highest scoring applicant out of six proposals and the firm will provide architectural and engineering design services for the new building.

The language education building will feature six classrooms. Four classrooms are planned for construction in 2021 and two older grade classrooms are planned for future construction.

Currently, the Tribe has enough funds to pay for the two planned blended K-4 classrooms through a \$500,000 federal grant and has raised more than 50 percent of the funds needed for two preschool classrooms and has arranged funding for most of the balance.

However, there are not sufficient funds to pay for the design of the two older grade classrooms at this time, but the Tribe may be the funder of last resort if grant applications currently submitted prove unsuccessful.

Because the MCA Architects contract was for more than \$100,000, it required Tribal Council approval.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved a funding agreement not to exceed \$132,711 with the Bonneville Power Administration to fund the work of Hydrosystem Compliance Specialist Lawrence Schwabe. The Tribe has been receiving the funding since 2010, Schwabe said during the Tuesday, Dec. 22, Legislative Action Commit-

tee meeting;

- Appointed Clackamas County Commissioner Martha Schrader to a two-year term on the Spirit Mountain Community Fund Board of Trustees. She will take the place of Oregon Commissioner of Labor Val Hoyle;
- Approved final adoption of amendments to the Housing Ordinance that will allow the Housing Department to re-assign a lease after a tenant defaults and comply with requirements of the federally insured Housing and Urban Development mortgage program. The amendments were originally adopted on an emergency basis in early September and the Tribe received no comments for the membership regarding the changes;
- Approved applying to the Oregon Department of Education's Student Success Tribal Language grant program for \$150,000 that would fund, if received, language assessments and developing Tribal language teachers;
- And approved the enrollment of one infant into the Tribe because he or she meets the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

Tribal Council also approved the agenda for the 11 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 3, General Council meeting that will be held via the Zoom teleconferencing application. The Education Department will give a report.

To watch the entire meeting, visit the Tribal government's website at www.grandronde.org and click on the Government icon and then Videos. ■

