

General Council briefed on Housing Department

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals staff writer

Housing Department Manager Shonn Leno briefed Tribal members on the department’s various programs and accomplishments during a Sunday, April 11, General Council meeting held via the Zoom video conferencing application.

During the meeting, Leno discussed the department’s various programs and some challenging aspects of delivering services during a global pandemic.

“It’s been a tough year for everyone and housing is included in that, but we have done our best to continue our mission,” he said. “Many of you know our mission statement: We are here to ensure the membership has safe housing, which is affordable, promotes self-sufficiency, Tribal pride and Tribal spirit. We’re also going to create additional housing opportunities for Tribal members.”

Leno said that despite a sluggish economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the housing market remained very productive.

“People are still buying and selling homes,” he said.

The Housing Department provides Tribal members of all income levels with up to \$10,000 for down payment assistance on a home, and serves the membership across the United States. In 2020, there were 34.5 grants awarded, which included 10 low-income grants.

There also were seven home medical adaptation grants, 17 home repair grants and four weatherization grants awarded.

The home improvement matching grant program continues to be one of the most popular programs,

Leno said, with 37 grants awarded in 2020. There is a lifetime cap of \$4,000 and funds can be used for virtually anything that improves a home’s value. The applicant is required to contribute a dollar-for-dollar amount to receive money.

“It’s a pretty wide-open opportunity for Tribal members to increase the value of their home,” Leno said.

Although down payment and home improvement grants remained very popular, rental grants went mostly unused during the pandemic, Leno said.

“There are just no places available,” he said. “Obviously during the pandemic people weren’t moving and were advised not to move. They sat unused.”

The Housing Department partners with Yamhill and Polk county housing authorities to provide 20 units and five units for Grand Ronde Tribal members, respectively.

Student rental assistance programs served 115 Tribal members attending school part- or full-time with stipends of up to \$500 per month to assist with housing costs.

Leno also discussed how the pandemic had resulted in the department mostly offering online and phone services for things such as mandatory tenant meetings and addressing behavioral issues in housing. Community programs such as Family Night Out and the popular Easter egg hunt were canceled.

“We are a personal program so having to put everything on an online platform has been hard for us,” Leno said. “It’s been a tough year to give services, but not get to see anyone we normally get to see.”

New grant opportunities in 2020 from CARES Act funding included rental assistance, utility assistance, mortgage assistance, personal protective equipment for various departments in the Tribe and assistance to homeless Tribal members.

“We are continuing to offer all of these opportunities to Tribal members affected by COVID in 2021,” Leno said.

He also updated the membership about current housing construction projects.

“In 2020, we added two new four-plex apartments as housing options,” Leno said. “Also, Tribal Council authorized housing staff to proceed with planning and design for a mixed-income Elders community, and planning and development of a home ownership community.”

The mixed-income Elders community will be located adjacent to current Elders housing and include 36 units to be constructed in phases, with a goal of construction to start sometime in 2021.

The home ownership program has been in the works for a few years, and Housing Department officials are hoping construction can begin this year at the 80-acre Rink Two property east of the Grand Meadows manufactured home subdivision.

Home lots will be roughly 10,000 square feet with approximately 20 homes in the first phase of construction.

“Hopefully, we’ll have more site work done later this year and possibly a home constructed,” Leno said.

It’s been 23 years since Grand Meadows, located on Tribal property at McPherson and Grand Ronde roads, opened to Tribal families.

Housing Department officials say a second development is long overdue.

The Tribe’s current housing options typically have occupation rates of 94 percent or higher and lack of available market-rate homes has been a sticking point in Tribal members moving home to Grand Ronde and working in the community.

Housing Department challenges included having to clean seven drug-contaminated units for a total cost of \$151,247 so that the units could be safely occupied. Another ongoing issue is the housing wait list. The longest someone has been on there is since 2016 waiting for a vacancy in Elder Housing.

Afterward, Leno fielded eight questions from the online audience. Tribal Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy thanked him for the presentation.

“I know that housing is a big issue for the Tribe,” she said. “Hopefully, we are able to address all of the Tribal member (housing) issues.”

In other action, it was announced that the next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, May 2, via Zoom with a program report from the Tribal Employment Rights Office. There is also the possibility that the meeting will include limited in-person attendance.

Door prize winners were Robert Wiggs, Simone Auger, Shelley Sneed, Veronica Gaston and Mike Portwood, \$50 each; and Herbert Stephens, Faye Smith and Cristina Lara, \$100 each.

The meeting can be viewed by visiting the Tribal government’s website at www.grandronde.org and clicking on the Government tab and then Videos. ■



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ATTENTION ALL HOUSING TENANTS AND GUEST
PLEASE SLOW DOWN IN ELDER HOUSING
Also, please make sure and maintain low levels of music in the Elder community.



ROCK SCAVENGER HUNT
W/CTGR Youth Council

8 RIDDLES FOR 8 ROCKS

FIND A ROCK WHERE THE RIDDLES LEAD, TAKE A SELFIE W/ THE ROCKS YOU FIND & POST THEM WITH OUR HASHTAG, #CTGRYOUTH COUNCIL


EACH SELFIE POSTED WITH THE ROCKS GETS YOU AN ENTRY INTO THE RAFFLE.

THE MORE ROCKS YOU FIND THE BIGGER THE PRIZE.

RIDDLES POSTED ON YEP FB, YOUTH COUNCIL FB & YOUTH COUNCIL INSTAGRAM

THE DEADLINE TO GET YOUR SELFIES POSTED IS MAY 1ST

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Tribal Veterans Service Office Veteran Outreach Event
Memorial Day
Honoring families of Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Veterans who have walked on...

Let us express our gratitude and pride for those who served; those who put their lives on the line; and the families who supported them. We raise our hands to acknowledge and honor the service of the Veteran in your family and their memory. hayu masi.

To Receive a Memorial Day gift:

1. Be a Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) Tribal Member or, a Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde family member with
2. A CTGR Veteran in your family who has made their journey (from any service era) and,
3. Submit a photo, biography, story, or information about your tribal veteran and/or their military service **by May 21, 2021** (to TVSO office by mail/email).
(All information submitted is kept confidential and will not be shared).


In return:


The first 100 submissions get to choose one of the following gifts:

- ♥ A gardening tool kit for the veterans gravesite (15 available) or,
- ♥ A picture frame for the veterans photo (15 available) or,
 - ♥ A 4x6" American flag with a silk flower (40 available)
 - ♥ 5.5x8" Military Branch flags (a few of each branch, 30 available)

Gift pick up will be during Memorial Day Week. Individuals who sign up will be contacted to set up a date/time for drive-through pick-up.

Arrangements can be made if you would like your gift mailed.





TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

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