

1999 amendment controls membership

MEETINGS continued from front page

In October 2019, Tribal Council approved a \$50,000 contract with Carefree, Ariz., attorney Robert Lyttle (Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma) to research Tribal enrollment issues and conduct public meetings. Like many things in 2020, that effort was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Lyttle's assignment finally came to fruition. Tribal members were mailed an informational packet on Saturday, May 15, that included a cover letter from Kennedy, a flier announcing the May 26 meeting and Lyttle's 20-page report that traces Grand Ronde membership and enrollment issues from 1936 to the present.

"Tribal Council has initiated a public information and outreach plan to provide important information about enrollment and membership issues to all members of the Tribe," Kennedy said in her cover letter. "We invite you to participate in the open process to learn about our enrollment history and to offer comments and suggestions going forward."

Kennedy's letter said there will be four meetings – two using Zoom and two hybrid in-person meetings held in Grand Ronde that will have limited seating and also be available via Zoom.

"The open process established by Tribal Council will allow us, as members of the Tribe, to find solutions to the various enrollment issues facing the Tribe," Kennedy said. "Any proposed changes to the membership requirements should

be based on well-informed decisions about the current membership requirements, and how the requirements have changed over time. I am committed to addressing these important issues so that we can all move forward together."

After an invocation from Bobb, Lyttle summarized his report on Tribal votes regarding membership requirements.

The only two amendments that surpassed the high threshold of receiving the constitutionally mandated two-thirds approval both restricted membership. In 1999, Tribal members approved more restrictive membership criteria, such as changing Indian blood to Grand Ronde blood, and in 2008 approved a five-year waiting period for new members wanting to join from other Tribes.

"I think it's fair to say that those were more restrictive requirements," Lyttle said. "... The 1999 amendment is what controls membership issues today. Until there is a change to that, those are going to be the rules. ... At the end of the day, whether or not to make any changes to these criteria is something for the voters. Only the voters can change the membership criteria."

All other efforts to change membership requirements via constitutional amendments have either been defeated outright or thwarted by the 66.7 percent approval requirement.

For example, Tribal voters in 2019 approved an amendment to allow siblings from the same Tribal parents to be enrolled. However, since it only received 63 percent

approval from those who voted, it was not adopted. Tribal Council was prompted to put the split-family proposal out for a vote because it was supported by 69.7 percent of voters in 2018 when it was on the Tribal Council ballot as an advisory vote.

Lyttle said that most Tribes he has worked with have simple majority votes to change their constitutions. He also noted the irony that if the Tribe wants to lower the threshold to amend the Constitution, it currently would need 66.7 percent of those voting to approve that amendment.

According to Lyttle's report, Tribal voter participation in elections aimed at amending the Tribal Constitution has never exceeded 38 percent of adult Tribal members at the time of the election. As few as 15 percent of adult Tribal members have participated in an election to amend the Constitution.

"Voters who are unfamiliar with the BIA voter registration requirements often mistakenly believe that eligibility to vote in a Tribal election allows them to vote in a BIA Secretarial Election," Lyttle's report says. "Confusion over the rules usually causes low voter turnout."

"The low voter turnout breaks my heart," one Tribal member posted during the meeting.

Lyttle also said that the federal government wants to get out of the business of supervising Tribal elections. However, a proposal to remove the federal government from Grand Ronde Tribal constitutional amendment elections was rejected by voters in 2015.

Tribal member Eirik Thorsgard said he thought Lyttle's report failed to provide context for some of the Tribe's constitutional amendment votes. For instance, he said, the wholesale changing of enrollment requirements approved in

1999 was in response to burgeoning membership after Spirit Mountain Casino opened and the failure to remove the Bureau of Indian Affairs from Tribal constitutional elections in 2015 was prompted by a distrust of Tribal leadership at the time.

Former Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek said she is opposed to any more disenrollments unless there is proven fraud and thinks blood quantum is leading the Tribe to self-termination. However, she said she supports the two-thirds approval requirement to amend the Constitution. "There should be overwhelming support if you are going to change the Constitution," she said.

After Lyttle's presentation, more than 20 Tribal members commented or asked questions about the Tribe's enrollment policies and the intent of holding the meetings.

"These meetings are to provide information about our enrollment situation," Kennedy said. "At this point, we want to listen to our members before we put together any action plan. We certainly are looking at recommendations and suggestions that our members might have and, again, we are considering every avenue."

She added that after the additional three meetings are held, Tribal Council will receive a report from Lyttle before proceeding with any possible proposals to change the Tribe's enrollment requirements.

The next meetings will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 10, 17 and 24 with the June 10 and 24 meetings being held in Grand Ronde with limited in-person attendance as well as Internet accessibility.

Tribal members who would like to watch the recording of the May 26 meeting should send an e-mail to Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez at stacia.martin@grandronde.org and she will provide a link. ■

2021 SUMMER STUDENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS

JUNE 15 • BASIC FINANCES
Learn how to manage money, learn more about checking accounts, credit cards and much more.

JUNE 22 • CULTURE PRESENTATION
Learn more about the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. This is one you don't want to miss!

JUNE 29 • COLLEGE & CAREERS
Learn about your next steps in life, what you can do now to prepare and opportunities you can take advantage of now.

JULY 6 • EMPLOYMENT
Learn practical tips of how to get a job and keep a job.

JULY 20 • 21 TRUST FUNDS
This workshop is for CTGR Tribal member students ages, 18 – 20.

Four professional development workshops will be offered this summer for all Native students currently in grades 9 - 12th. The fifth and last workshop will be for Tribal member students ages 18-20.

All sessions are approximately one hour and there will be a raffle prize at the end of each session! Workshops will be held at the CTGR Employment building lower floor conference rooms and all sessions start at 1 p.m. Be sure to sign up below on the link provided for one or all classes. There are limited openings in each workshop, don't delay and sign-up today. If you have questions, please email YouthEnrichment@grandronde.org or call 503-879-2101. We hope to see you there!

Please note: Students will be required to health screen in (temperature check and basic health questions) prior to entering workshop. Masks are required and social distancing for each session.

<http://bit.ly/summer2021professionaldevelopment>

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde CREEKSIDE ELDER HOUSING – PHASE III Proposal due 2 p.m. Thursday, June 17, 2021 INVITATION TO BIDS

THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE,
CREEKSIDE ELDER HOUSING – PHASE III PROJECT.

Sealed bids must be received by Ryan Webb, Project Manager, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347, by or before 2 p.m. local time, Thursday June 17, 2021. The project includes constructing new storm and sewer systems, water main system, curbs, sidewalks, pavement, illumination and utilities for the successful completion of the project. A pre-bid meeting will be held at 2 p.m. prevailing local time, Thursday, June 3, 2021, at 25000 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde OR 97347. Questions or requests for clarification shall be directed in writing to the Project Manager, Ryan Webb, via e-mail at Ryan.Webb@grandronde.org by 2 p.m. prevailing local time, Monday, June 14, 2021.

Electronic copies of the Plans and Bid Booklet are available by emailing Ryan Webb at Ryan.Webb@grandronde.org or calling 503-879-2404.

Respondents shall provide a written proposal by 2 p.m. Thursday, June 17, 2021, to Ryan Webb, Project Manager, at 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, Oregon 97347. Specific information regarding document submittal procedures and due dates will be found in the Bid Booklet. ■