



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is in the process of purchasing the 37.65-acre Bateman property at 45375 Hebo Road. The site is just west of úyxat Powwow Grounds off Highway 22 in the Grand Ronde area.

Tribal Council approves acquisition of properties

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde’s land holdings are about to increase by more than 500 acres after Tribal Council approved two land acquisitions during its Wednesday, Sept. 15, meeting.

The first property purchase would see the Tribe acquire the 37.65-acre Bateman property just west of úyx-at Powwow Grounds off Highway 22 (Hebo Road) in the Grand Ronde area.

To facilitate that purchase, Tribal Council also approved the sixth supplemental budget of 2021 that would allocate \$360,000 in gaming dividend to fund the acquisition.

The second land acquisition would bring the Tribe the 463-acre Enchanted Oaks property located in Marion County just north of Jefferson. The purchase would use Bonneville Power Administration funds through its Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program.

The property features several types of habitat, including oak woodland and savanna, riparian forest and wet prairie that hosts multiple priority species.

Enchanted Oaks would bring the Tribe’s conservation property holdings purchased through the Bonneville Power Administration program to more than 2,456 acres.

Lands Manager Jan Michael Reibach said during the Tuesday, Sept. 14, Legislative Action Committee meeting that Grand Ronde has obtained the most acreage of any

Pacific Northwest Tribe participating in the program.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved a 10-year agreement with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Partners Program for the Takilth conservation property located in Polk County. The Tribe took ownership of the 108-acre property earlier this year. Enrolling in the Partners Program will provide the Tribe access to more resources for restoration of the property;
- Approved Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. retaining a maximum of \$12.25 million in gaming revenue to fund capital improvement projects, such as building a recreational vehicle park and installing food outlets that are taking the place of the now-defunct Cedar Plank Buffet;
- And approved re-appointing Tribal Council members Denise Harvey, Kathleen George and Jack Giffen Jr. to the Spirit Mountain Community Fund Board of Trustees for two-year terms.

The Sept. 15 Tribal Council meeting marked the first for newly elected member Michael Cherry. Tribal Council also re-elected Cheryle A. Kennedy as chairwoman and elected Michael Langley as secretary. Langley succeeds Jon A. George, who nominated him for the position.

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

Tribal Council OKs fifth supplemental budget

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council approved the fifth supplemental budget of 2021 during its Wednesday, Sept. 29, meeting to fund an increase in wages for Tribal governmental employees.

The \$486,000 allocation will cover the increased salaries due to the Tribe raising its minimum wage to \$15 an hour and a complementary increase for some employees to offset wage compression caused by the minimum wage increase.

Interestingly, the sixth supplemental budget of 2021 was approved before the fifth on Sept. 15 when Tribal Council OK’d spending \$360,000 to purchase the 37.65-acre Bateman property in Grand Ronde.

Previous supplemental budgets in 2021 have allocated an additional \$300,000 to the Small Loan Program, funded a cost-of-living increase for the Elders’ pension program, allowed the Natural Resources Department to purchase a new 500-gallon wildland fire engine and permitted the Tribe to purchase properties in Grand Ronde and Wood Village.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved the Tribe’s \$7,500 in annual dues to the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and named Tribal Council member Jon A. George as the principal delegate to the organization and also OK’d the Tribe’s \$30,000 in annual dues to the National Congress of American Indians and named

- Tribal Council Secretary Michael Langley as the principal delegate to the organization;
- Approved a Tribal credit card for newly elected Tribal Council member Michael Cherry and removed former Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. as a signer on Tribal accounts;
 - Re-appointed Tribal Council member Kathleen George to the Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. Board of Directors and appointed Cherry to the board to fill a vacant seat. Both terms run through September 2024;
 - And approved the enrollment of 24 people into the Tribe and the re-enrollment of four individuals because they meet the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.
- Tribal Council also approved the agenda for the 11 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 3, General Council meeting, which will be a presentation by Baird regarding the Tribe’s investment portfolio. The meeting will be held via the Zoom teleconference application.
- Also included in the Sept. 29 Tribal Council packet was an approved authorization to proceed that names the new home ownership development in Grand Ronde tipsu-ili’i, which translates into grassland. Rejected names included lakal-ili’i (flatland) and haws-lulu (circle of houses).
- To watch the entire meeting, visit the Tribal government’s website at www.grandronde.org and click on the Government tab and then Videos. ■

Clothes Closet open Fridays

The Clothes Closet is open from 9 a.m. to noon Fridays on the Tribal campus near the Elders Activity Center at the end of Blacktail Drive. The Clothes Closet accepts clothing, small appliances, small pieces of furniture, electronics and household goods that are clean and in good condition. It does not accept books, large TVs or furniture, but there is a community board where people can post those items.

For more information or emergency clothes, contact Lori Walker-Hernandez at 559-847-7565. ■

‘This is happening at every casino and business nationwide’

CASINO continued
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their probationary periods.

However, the referral bonuses do not apply to rehires at the casino.

Other incentives for people to work at the casino include a \$1,000 sign-on bonus, including re-hires who have been gone at least six months; a \$17-an-hour minimum wage – more than \$35,000 a year – for non-highly tipped positions; a \$1 differential for graveyard shift workers; time and half for employees who work holidays; and \$3 an hour extra for employees who work weekends that fall on a holiday.

And wait, that’s not all, Mercier said.

For each quarter that an employee has perfect attendance, they will receive an additional \$250 (an extra \$1,000 a year) and employees earn up to 19 days off in their first year of employment. They also receive a free meal and are paid while they eat it.

As far as benefits, Mercier said that employees pay only \$10 per paycheck for health insurance, can contribute to a 401(k) plan for retirement, receive free flu immunizations and get a free turkey or ham for the holidays.

“This is happening at every casino and business nationwide,” Mercier said about the casino’s difficulties in attracting employees. “I recognize we are not the only organization suffering.” ■

Community Health Program

Medical Transport Services

Medical transportation services are available to Tribal members within the six-county service area when an alternate means of transportation is not available. Advance notice required.

Please call 503-879-2078 to schedule a reservation.