

Housing developments are underway in Grand Ronde

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Grand Ronde Tribe has the largest membership of the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, but it has the least amount of Reservation housing available for its members.

“We didn’t have the land base to do so,” Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said. “We’ve been involved in developing housing for more than 25 years and continue to work on housing issues. ... We do know there is a housing shortage and many do not have a roof over their heads.”

The discussion was part of the Tribe’s monthly Facebook Live meetings, which keep the membership up-to-date on a variety of topics. Approximately 140 logged in to listen to the event that was held on Wednesday, March 16.

In addition to Kennedy, Tribal Council member Kathleen George, Tribal Council Secretary Michael Langley, Housing Department Manager Shonn Leno and Tribal Engineering and Planning Manager Ryan Webb participated.

Kennedy said that through federal funding and Spirit Mountain Casino revenues, the Tribe has been able to fund a package that addresses the housing shortage issue with two new housing developments: the Creekside Elder duplexes with 24 units located at the southwest corner of Hebo and Grand Ronde roads and a new home ownership opportunity with 52 single-family homes at the end of McPherson Road east of Grand Ronde Road.

“We are working diligently to make sure housing is available and you get the best product for the least money,” Kennedy said.

Webb updated the membership as to where each development is in the construction process.

The Creekside Elder Housing project is in the process of having utilities, sidewalks and roads installed.

The complex will have 24 two-bedroom, one-bath, energy efficient units with approximately 1,120 feet that will include all appliances. The



Cheryle A. Kennedy

homes will have solar panels, unit specific batteries to store the solar energy and plug-ins for emergency use of generators. The expected completion date is spring 2023.

The single-family housing development is in phase one of construction and will include 20 lots with different housing plans available to suit individual Tribal families. It is also in the process of having roads, sidewalks and utilities installed, with that work expected to wrap up in May. Home construction itself is tentatively expected to start this summer and should take six to nine months for each home.

Phase two will have 32 lots and site improvements will begin in spring 2023. The price per square foot ranges from \$175 to \$230, which is below average. According to homes.com, the average price per square foot of a single family home in Oregon is currently \$269.

“The homebuilder (Scholten Construction) is working on individual costs for each different design,” Webb said. “This is a very trying and expensive time given the supply chain issues and inflation costs.

We are working closely with them to make sure we are getting the best value for the money.”

To date, more than 100 Tribal members have expressed interest in purchasing the homes and a lender has reached out to them to see if they are interested in continuing the prequalification process.

Leno updated attendees on the current state of Tribal rental housing. As of March 16, there is a waiting list of 37 applicants for one-bedroom units, 10 for two-bedroom units, nine for three-bedroom units and one for a four-bedroom unit. The oldest application is from 2018.

In Elder housing, there are 30 applicants on the waiting list for two-bedroom units and the oldest application is from 2017.

Market rate housing has eight applicants for the one-bedroom units, 17 for the two-bedroom units, five for the three-bedroom units, two for the four-bedroom units and one

for a five-bedroom unit. The oldest application is from 2018.

Currently, five Elder units, eight family units and one market-rate unit are being remodeled and are not yet ready for occupancy.

The Tribe also has applied for a Housing and Urban Development grant to construct five more low-income apartment complexes in Tribal housing and will begin the project if the grant is awarded.

After the presentations were complete, Leno and Webb took 14 questions and comments from the audience.

“I hope our meetings have given answers to questions that are important to you,” Kennedy said. “We want members to have a place of shelter. It is heartbreaking to see those who don’t have any.”

The next Facebook Live event will be held in April and the topic is undecided. Check the Tribe’s social media pages or website at www.grandronde.org for updates. ■

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