

# Grand Ronde Road repairs resurface after two-year delay

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The long-awaited repair work on Grand Ronde Road is back on Polk County's docket. Tribal Public Works Coordinator John Mercier said during the Tuesday, April 19, Legislative Action Committee meeting.

In reaction, Tribal Council approved the Tribe contributing approximately \$78,000 to help fund Polk County fixing the roadway that is adjacent to the Grand Ronde Reservation during its Wednesday, April 20, meeting.

The work was first slated to be performed in 2020, but was delayed by smoky skies caused by numerous wildfires that occurred in western Oregon in September of that year. Then there was a lack of bidders because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Polk County, which has jurisdiction over the roadway, will perform engineering and project management while the Tribe will pay an estimated \$78,000 to help fund the civil engineering as part of its Long Range Transportation Plan/Tribal Transportation Program.

Polk County Public Works Director Todd Whitaker said in 2020 that the repairs involve patch paving to fix the potholes and replacing the "alligator" cracking – interconnected cracking of the asphalt – to help keep the road in shape for a few more years.

Road repair, which will now include substantial work and repaving, is scheduled to be completed during the 2023 construction season, Mercier said.

Grand Ronde Road was last significantly reconstructed in 2009 and completed in 2010 for \$4.8 million using a combination of Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service and Polk County funds.



Photo Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Cracks in the pavement and a growing pothole are visible on Grand Ronde Road on Tuesday, April 19. Tribal Council approved the Tribe contributing approximately \$78,000 to help fund Polk County fixing the roadway that is adjacent to the Grand Ronde Reservation.**

The two main culprits causing the potholes and alligator cracking are moisture issues with Grand Ronde-area soil and heavy trucks using the road as a shortcut to Highway 18.

In addition, Tribal Council also approved the Tribal Transportation Program agreement between the Tribe and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved the enrollment of two infants into the Tribe because they meet the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance;
- Approved a non-binding memorandum of understanding with the Housing Authority of Yamhill County that may see the Tribe invest up to \$7 million to help build a 175-unit housing project on almost seven acres on South-

east Norton Lane in McMinnville near Willamette Valley Medical Center. The potential Tribal investment would guarantee that 20 units would be dedicated to Grand Ronde Tribal member preference;

- Approved applying for a maximum \$300,000 Bonneville Power Administration grant that would be used to replace two failing stream crossings and modify a berm on the Tribe's Chahalpam conservation property located in Marion County, as well as a maximum \$100,000 Bureau of Land Management grant that would help maintain 62 acres at the site;
- And approved a construction contract with Perlo Construction of Tualatin to expand the Tribe's medication-assisted treatment center, Great Circle Recovery, at

1011 N. Commercial St. in Salem. Engineering and Planning Manager Ryan Webb said the work will remodel more of the building's interior that has been vacated by tenants to expand the clinic and offer more services to opioid-addicted clients. Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez said the more than \$573,000 contract will require a supplemental budget process.

Tribal Council also approved the agenda for the Sunday, May 1, hybrid General Council meeting that will be held in Tribal Council Chambers for better acoustics and on Zoom. The meeting will start at 11 a.m. and feature presentations from the Health & Wellness Center and the Cultural Resources Department about the Museum of Natural History internship program in New York City for Tribal youth.

Also included in the April 20 Tribal Council packet were approved authorizations to proceed that OK'd the Natural Resources Department submitting an application for the approximately 110-acre Deer Path Habitat conservation project to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for the purpose of the Tribe becoming the long-term landowner and manager of the project, approved applying for a 2022 volunteer fire assistance grant from the Oregon Department of Forestry and U.S. Department of Agriculture, and approved Emergency Services applying to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation for a \$29,446 grant to purchase thermal imaging cameras.

To watch the entire meeting, visit the Tribal government's website at [www.grandronde.org](http://www.grandronde.org) and click on the Government tab and then Videos. ■

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