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Tribal Council approves 2024 spending plan

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council held its final meeting of 2023 on Wednesday, Dec. 27, by handling items brought to it during its Tuesday, Dec. 19, and Tuesday, Dec. 26, Legislative Action Committee meetings.

Council members approved the 2024 final budget, which included a 3.2-percent increase in spending from the 2023 budget.



Chris Leno

The 2024 draft budget was mailed to Tribal members in early November in the *Tilixam Wawa* and Tribal Finance Officer Chris Leno briefed the membership on its specifics in executive session during the November General

Council meeting.

Adult Tribal members had until Monday, Dec. 4, to comment on the draft spending plan.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved an agreement with Upqwena LLC to remove former Tribal Economic Development Director Bruce Thomas as manager and replace him with Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez. Thomas recently resigned his position as Economic Development Director after being reappointed to the position earlier this year;
- Approved a secured loan of up to \$50,000 to Shasta Administrative Services of Redmond from the Tribe's TriState Capital Bank line of credit. The decision brings the amount of Tribal funds loaned to Shasta, which the Grand Ronde Tribe has co-owned since November 2012 with Honolulu-based Hawaii-Western Management Group, to \$1.4 million;
- Approved reappointing Michael Boyce as the Grand Ronde Gaming Commission's executive director;
- Approved amendments to the Elders Committee bylaws regarding voting/honorary mem-

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Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Health Administration Operations Director Tresa Mercier is hugged by Tribal Council member Kathleen George as she is recognized for her 39 years of working for the Tribe during the fourth-quarter Years of Service awards and annual Employee Appreciation Holiday Party held at the Spirit Mountain Casino Event Center on Thursday, Dec. 21. Mercier is the longest serving-Tribal employee.

Celebrating service and the holidays

Tresa Mercier marks 39 years of working for the Tribe

By Sherron Lumley

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal employees gathered at the Spirit Mountain Casino Event Center for the The Employee Appreciation Holiday Party combined with the fourth-quarter Years of Service awards on Thursday, Dec. 21.

A buffet of salmon, turkey and prime rib was served after a welcome by Tribal Council

Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and invocation by Tribal Council member Jon A. George.

Tribal Interim General Manager Chris Leno announced the service awards.

"What we have today is truly amazing and this is one of the best highlights of the year,"

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Amendment to fix Thompson strip error signed into law

By Danielle Harrison and Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals staff

WASHINGTON — An amendment to the Grand Ronde Reservation Act that would fix a mistake incorporated into the act in 1994 was unanimously approved by the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, Dec. 19.

The bill was signed into law by President Biden on Tuesday, Dec. 26, and it will allow the Grand Ronde Tribe to pursue future fixes within the state of Oregon if other

The error was discovered after passage of the Grand Ronde Reservation Act in 1988 that returned 9,811 acres to the Tribe.

errors are found.

The Bureau of Land Management discovered a survey error on the Grand Ronde Reservation that dated back to 1871. The error was discovered after passage of the Grand Ronde Reservation Act in 1988 that returned 9,811 acres to the Tribe.

Surveyor David Thompson had incorrectly surveyed the eastern boundary of the Reservation, leaving 84 acres unsurveyed. The land also was excluded from a 1904 sale of unallotted lands within the Reservation and Grand Ronde was not compensated for it.

Until the error was discovered, BLM treated the land as Oregon and California Railroad Grant Lands and permitted private companies to harvest timber on the acreage.

After being informed of the survey error, the Grand Ronde Tribe determined the parcel, called the Thompson Strip, was unmanageable because of narrow boundaries and divided ownership interests.

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