

Tribal Council approves BIA funding request

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council approved a funding request to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for \$261,044 during its Wednesday, Oct. 8, meeting.

If approved, the BIA Tribal Justice Support program would be able to offer trainings and technical assistance to the Tribal Court, specifically to further the development, operation and enhancement of judicial systems within the court.

During a Tuesday, Oct. 21, Legislative Action Committee meeting, Tribal Court Administrator Shawn Branson said that the Tribal Court had participated in an assessment by the Whitener Group in November 2024 to evaluate Tribal needs and provide recommendations to the court.

“We’re beyond thrilled and excited to have an audience with you today for this recommendation that has been two years in the works,” she said. “How this whole thing began was with a letter of support from Tribal Council in December 2023, requesting that we be considered for the Tribal Court assessment. Last November, we participated in the assessment.”

Branson further explained that the court doesn’t have extensive civil procedure policies, which

results in barriers for people who come before the court, particularly Tribal members who represent themselves in cases.

“It’s been difficult not having some of these developed coming in (to my position)...It’s been difficult to make sense out of some of the rules that are within the ordinance...some you have to go to the federal court and some others it’s the district court of Oregon. It has consistently created barriers just in the time I’ve been here.”

Court Operations Supervisor Julie Boekhoff noted that she’s been with the court for 28 years and that that civil procedure rules adopted in 2001 were approved to make it as easy as possible for attorneys to be able to practice in Tribal Court.

“What we found over the years is that it becomes a convoluted, difficult process, even for attorneys in the court...It is now a time for the court to look at how these rules are working and develop our own so it is consistent for everybody.”

Tribal Council also approved several board and committee appointments. These included: Appointing Nicole Liebelt to the Culture Committee with a term ending March 31, 2027; appointing Tisha Pellett to the Election Board with a term ending March 31, 2027; appointing

Kelly Nelson to the Health Committee with a term ending March 31, 2026; appointing Steve Bobb Jr. to the TERO Commission with a term ending March 31, 2028; and appointing Lisa Schmid and Bradley Senner, and reappointing Shayla Myrick-Meyer to the Timber Committee with terms ending March 31, 2027.

- In other action, Tribal Council:
- Approved a memorandum of understanding between the Tribe and the Oregon Judicial Department, Oregon U.S. District Court and the other eight Oregon Tribes;
 - Approved a memorandum of agreement between the Tribe and the Scappoose School District;
 - Approved an application for up to \$646,000 to the Administration for Community Living Older Americans Act grant;
 - Approved a purchase and sale agreement for a 55.93-acre Oregon State University timber property located in Grand Ronde, which will connect Spirit Mountain Road with the Risseeuw property;
 - And approved enrolling four infants and 45 non-infants into

the Tribe because they meet the requirements under the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

Additionally, Tribal Council set the agenda for the next General Council meeting. It will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 2, in Tribal Council Chambers and via Zoom, and feature a 2026 budget hearing in executive session.

Lastly, Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier read a statement regarding the campus lockdown Tuesday, Oct. 21, due to reports of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents being on the Tribal campus.

“I want everyone to know we met yesterday and everyone is taking this very seriously,” he said. “I want people to know that council is monitoring this and preparing for worst-case scenarios. I’m glad it wasn’t what we thought it was but we don’t want to be caught off guard if the worst-case scenario breaks out.”

See the story on page one about the campus lockdown for more information.

To watch the entire meeting, visit www.grandronde.org and click on the Videos tab. ■

Gas discount in Grand Ronde

Grand Ronde Tribal members, as well as Tribal and Spirit Mountain Casino employees, can receive a 30-cent per gallon discount on gasoline at the Tribally owned Grand Ronde Station convenience store.

There are, however, a few rules. Tribal members and employees must go inside and show either their enrollment card or employee identification card to receive the discount. ■

SNAP benefits won’t be paid for November

By Nicole Montesano

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Trump Administration has notified states that it will not pay out Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plan benefits in November while the federal shutdown remains in place. SNAP is completely federally funded and falls under the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The federal government has provided funding for Oregon’s WIC program to continue into November, and free and reduced-price school meals will still be available. Currently, the shutdown is not affecting the National School Lunch Program, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services.

But some 757,000 Oregonians on SNAP will receive no new benefits issued after Friday, Oct. 31, according to Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek. One in six Oregonians receives SNAP benefits, according to ODHA. Approximately 210,000 of them are children. Another 130,000 are adults 65 and older.

“This is a cruel and unacceptable situation,” Kotek said in a press release. “President Trump should focus on feeding families by negotiating a deal with Congress, not doing other things like deploying troops in American cities on taxpayers’ dime. Any delay or reduction in food benefits in November will cause unnecessary hardship and hunger for hundreds of thousands of people in Oregon during the month of Thanksgiving. ... It would hit

rural communities and economies particularly hard because of the high number of households utilizing SNAP benefits.”

Benefits already loaded onto cards are expected to remain available and the cards should work as usual, however no new benefits will be loaded for November.

The department said it would work as quickly as possible to distribute SNAP benefits if the shutdown ends. It is still accepting applications for benefits.

SNAP participants should check their EBT card balances regularly, it said, and continue following SNAP rules and reporting requirements. They also may sign up for a ONE Online account, and download the Oregon ONE Mobile app at benefits.oregon.gov, to receive notices about their SNAP cases.

The budget bill approved by Congress in July also makes changes to the SNAP program that are expected to end many people’s eligibility for the program or cut back on the benefits they receive. Among those is an increase in the age limit for the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents time limit. The bill added exceptions to the time limit, however, for federally recognized Tribal members.

It ended the time limit exceptions for veterans, people who are homeless and children in foster care, once they hit adulthood, and lowered the exception for parents, to those with children younger than 14. ■

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No experience necessary, just the willingness to learn and share

Your presence is a gift we cannot replace.

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT
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503-879-1349



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