

Andrea: Hi, my name is Andrea Taylor and welcome to our podcast. I'm the public information assistant with the Public Information Department and today we have Kurtis. Kurtis, how are you?

Kurtis: Good. How are you?

Andrea: I'm well.

Kurtis: It's good to see you again.

Andrea: Good to see you. Welcome back. Have more updates?

Kurtis: Yes. So we're here for a monthly update. And again, from the membership, we welcome any comments that you guys want to hear about. but we are doing this on a monthly basis, so.

Andrea: And in the podcast on the website there is actually a form that our members and our listeners can fill out to give suggestions to us.

Kurtis: Well, we welcome everybody's input and ideas. So.

Andrea: All right, well, let's dig into it. Let's start. So how are some of our big projects coming along?

Kurtis: Well, as you know, we have a lot of big projects all going on simultaneously, and they're all coming along very well. Let's start with the phase two of the new museum project. So, right now we're in the middle of phase two. They're doing some road realignment work, some work with infrastructure under the road, and then they're doing a new parking lot. And that project should be completed by the time that Pow-Wow starts. So we're very hopeful that when Pow-Wow gears up, that all of those construction crews and equipment are out of the way.

Andrea: Okay, and then there will be parking then for our elders?

Kurtis: There will be more parking right in front of the Veterans Memorial Wall.

Andrea: Okay.

Kurtis: Yeah, there'll be a small parking lot there that will be new to service the museum, but also other events that we have. That project is on track for completion. It's going to be, something that's unfortunate, but later this summer, all of those trees that are up there next to the community center will come down so that we have room for the new museum. And that request for the planning department has sent out a request for qualifications to various contractors in the area. So hopefully we should be getting some more information back on starting phase three.

Andrea: So, what trees? Like toward the memorial or up by the Pow-Wow grounds?

Kurtis: It's more like when you're looking directly at the community center. Those that are to the left.

Andrea: Oh, okay.

Kurtis: Yep, so we're going to hopefully still keep some of those to the right, where we put the picnic tables and stuff. But, all of those to the left hand side will be taken out and hopefully used as part of the construction of the museum.

Andrea: Oh, I like that. So harvesting trees from our own land to build our own items and kind of get that regenerative, I don't know, repurposing and all those great things.

Kurtis: Yeah, it'd be great to see those trees used as some of the exposed beams. Part of the museum also has a dance house component. So maybe using it for part of the siting or shingles for that. We're looking at different ideas to repurpose those so that they don't go to waste.

Andrea: And so initially in my head I was thinking "oh, elder's woodcut." but that's a way better, not that it's way better, but that is a good repurposing of the trees that we're going to take down.

Kurtis: Yes. And so those will come down in the next couple of months. Everybody's pretty sad about it.

Andrea: A lot of them fell on the ice storm anyway.

Kurtis: Yes. We did have one fall on the Community Center and a few others fall the last couple of years. So yeah, it's a safety risk, but also it'll be, I mean, it's necessary for the museum.

Andrea: All right. Any other big projects?

Kurtis: We have the Lincoln City satellite clinic. We just received an update on that earlier this week with some photos that we hope to publish, probably in the July issue of Siletz News. So we want to do constant and frequent updates for the membership on the various projects that we have going on. They had to do an expansion of that building. They completely gutted the inside of it. They added an elevator but that project is still slated to be completed, I believe mid-September.

Andrea: Of this year?

Kurtis: Of this year. Yep.

Andrea: Okay, good. That's good tracking then.

Kurtis: Yeah, it's moving along very quickly. The Lincoln City Clinic, as a reminder, will be providing medical services, dental and behavioral health. So right now we're gearing up for establishing some budgets, coming up with a staffing plan for that facility. But it's still on track to be completed on time.

Andrea: And I drive by the new pharmacy here in Siletz all the time. It's making good progress. It's huge.

Kurtis: It is. It's a lot bigger, I think, than a lot of us anticipated. And it sits right on the sidewalk, so it's very prominent as you come through Siletz. And just so everybody knows, I believe the designs that we had on that building will have siding on it. So it's not going to look like a-

Andrea: A castle.

Kurtis: A brick building. No, it will have some space on the side of it reserved for a mural and some art that we're procuring an artist right now.

Andrea: Okay. Did you put out an artist call, or do you just kind of know a list of artists?

Kurtis: The clinic, I believe, reached out to a few prominent artists in the area that, I think, have worked with Nara and a few other tribes. We pitched some ideas to them, or they pitched ideas to us, rather. So we're going to go through a selection process on a couple different art installations that we're working on. One for the pharmacy. We did reserve some space for an art installation at the Lincoln City Clinic. And then possibly looking at other construction, whether it's the museum or we've even been tossing around some ideas of adding some art elements as you go up Gwee-Shut to the clinic, the current clinic, that huge rock wall right there, doing some artwork on that.

Andrea: That would be really awesome. They did something similar too, a retaining rock wall kind of in Toledo, but it is really pretty. I really like it.

Kurtis: Yeah. We hope we can get something done before year's end. We'll have some more updates on that.

Andrea: A small window of time.

Kurtis: In the next couple of months, yeah. We have limited amount of funds for these projects that have been identified, but, we're hoping that we can stretch those dollars to make all of those projects a reality.

Andrea: Okay. And no other projects then, or is just there's nothing really moving on the Salem Housing or...

Kurtis: Salem Housing is kind of in a limbo. It's not being delayed, it's more just in a transition of infrastructure to bringing on the contractor to do the actual construction of the housing units, the office space and this storage unit. So, it's not delayed, it's just in transition from that construction company that was putting in the roads, the fiber infrastructure, the drainage, the parking areas, all of that's wrapping up. And then the new phase will kick in, which is the actual construction.

Andrea: So do you have any updates from manager's meetings or tribal council meetings or highlights that we need to share?

Kurtis: Probably the biggest update from the council meeting in May was the Tribal Council, well actually the Budget Committee, made a recommendation to the council on our 2024-2025 EPR and carryover budgets were all approved and have been published internally. So if there's any questions from the membership on what's been approved, you can contact our staff and we can provide that information. And then it's also going to be published in the next confidential newsletter that will go out to each household.

Andrea: So there is plenty of ways to get access to that if you're interested.

Kurtis: Yeah, and it will be available on the website. All of the budgets that we have approved this month and then we're not slated for any more budget meetings until later this fall. I did want to provide some updates on some of our new staff, we're really excited. The HR department has been really busy onboarding some very key positions and I think in the month of May we brought on more than 20 new staff.

Andrea: It was a lot in that email, that welcome email that was sent out.

Kurtis: Yes, and some very key positions in there that I kind of provided an update last month on some staff that would be starting. I wanted to introduce Jennifer Alexander. She's the Human Resources director, comes to us with a lot of experience, mostly working in the nonprofit field. We have Jaime Pineda, or I should say, doctor Jaime Pineda. He's the new Social and Human services director, comes to us from Palm Springs, California.

Andrea: Oh, wow.

Kurtis: So, yeah, we're excited to have him on board. Isaac DeAnda, he's the new Housing manager. That's been a position that we haven't filled in quite some time. Samantha Christiansen, I just met with her yesterday, she's the new Health Information Records supervisor for the business office. So we have a new supervisory position that kind of oversees the front desk departments at the clinic and medical records. AJ Warren is the new Cultural Education manager for the Culture Department.

Andrea: That's right, he moved. He took Buddy's job because Buddy moved into a different position.

Kurtis: Yep. So, Buddy's now the Cultural Resources director, which used to be Robert Kentta for a long time. So, AJ is in charge of all of our major activities now. Culture Camp, Pow-Wow, Restoration.

Andrea: He's gonna rock it.

Kurtis: Very big job.

Andrea: Yes.

Kurtis: We also have, Sarah Ellisor. She's the new Salem Area Office supervisor. She replaced Bev Owen, who was in that position for 20 plus years, 30 plus years?

Andrea: For quite some time. As long as I think I've been here.

Kurtis: The local communities gonna miss Bev, and they've already welcomed Sarah. And then we have Priscilla Gomez. She's the Portland Area Office supervisor. We're glad to have her on board. Todd Logan, he's the new TLC coordinator, so the coordinator for the men's and women's TLC for the Behavioral Health department. Kelly Ellis has also started. She's the Self-Governance and Budget director. She's probably your best contact if you have questions regarding the budgets we just approved. She's doing a great job. And Forrest Pearson is the new Assistant Executive Health director. So it's been a position that we've been looking to have for a long time, is an assistant health director, and we're glad to have Forrest on board.

Andrea: Well, it's a big job up there to be just the clinic health director in general and to fly solo for so long. I'm glad that there's some help up there.

Kurtis: Yeah. The clinic is growing a lot bringing on board the pharmacy and the satellite clinic. it's just going to spur even more growth. So, actually, I think we almost hit a milestone this month of nearly hitting 300 employees for the administration.

Andrea: So, by end of summer?

Kurtis: By end of summer, yes. We're looking at bringing on several new positions where, probably by year's end, looking at establishing a Public Health Department. So we're going to start recruiting for the department here really soon.

Andrea: Do we want to talk about Public Health? What will that entail?

Kurtis: We can probably dive into a little bit more or get Ruby and Miranda to provide an update. Maybe next month, but Public Health will encompass several new, I don't want to say

services, but more support for the clinic. Public Health is really health data driven, so doing a lot of studies on it could be the impacts of climate change on our health and how to address those. It could include we might end up moving emergency management under Public Health. We're just exploring different options of what that department would look like. Probably start off pretty small and then grow as we find the need and funding for it.

Andrea: Well, let's dive into some of the things that we have going on around Siletz or within CTSI. So, I don't know how much time you spend up at the farm property, but they are doing so much extraordinary stuff up there. And I thought it would be fun to tap on that.

Kurtis: Yeah. farm property in the last year has sort of exploded. Every time I go out there, there's something new. Whether it's- I mean, they finished a parking lot, so they've got parking for all of the big events that we have out there. Several new greenhouses, rainwater collection systems, new fields that they've prepared for various vegetables or fruits. They're a growing department, I think they have five positions. Full time positions at the farm now, and it used to only be one.

Andrea: Yeah, it was just Zeph up there flying solo, working way too many hours.

Kurtis: Yeah, if you really take a tour of the farm, you can see that it is way too big for one staff. It's big for five staff and it's an investment that the tribe has made and the clinic has provided to see that project is successful. I believe that they just did some plant giveaways recently.

Andrea: They did.

Kurtis: So in the end of May they did plant giveaways at each of our area offices and then Siletz?

Andrea: Yeah, you could come in and they had this, it almost sort of looked like an inventory list and things that you could get. And there were guidelines on, you know, don't overtake, but take what you need. And they had tomatoes and tons of different varieties of tomatoes and flowers. And then they had medicinal plants, and then they just had some herbs like rosemary and thyme and basil. And then they had fruits such as...I think like raspberries, they had currant, and then they had some traditional plants that they were giving away as well, like camas bulbs and yeah, it was really awesome. It was great, it was. I think, from what I saw, it was a really successful event.

Kurtis: Yeah. I think last time I was out there they said they planted about 4000 plus tomatoes just to give away.

Andrea: Yeah, I think, I personally love the garden property. It's probably one of my favorite things to go out to. And it's such a welcoming environment out there too. The staff is always just really welcoming.

Kurtis: And when that project progresses a little more, we're talking about the house that's on that property is being remodeled right now to also be a learning kitchen. So the staff there can provide training and resources on how to preserve the food that you grow. And, have a demonstration kitchen. And that should all be done here in the next couple months. But yeah, it's a huge investment and it's a huge project and we're really proud of the staff that work out there that keep it going.

Andrea: Yeah. Now the garden, I always tell this story because it's just the best, that last- earlier this spring? I think it was earlier this spring. My kids, they were doing a movie up at the rec center and popcorn and activities. And then at the same time, they're doing canvas planting that same day at the garden. And I go "do you guys want to" - again, seven and 14 years old. "Do you want to go watch movies at the rec and play games, or do you want to go up to the Camas planting?" And it was a pretty unanimous chant of go, go to the garden, let's go to the garden. So we went to the garden and planted camas for a few hours.

Kurtis: Nice. That's really exciting. And, the staff there are more than welcoming too, I mean, if you just want to call up and say "hey, I want to stop by the farm." somebody will be out there to show you around. And if you're looking for any sort of plants, I'm sure that they'd be willing to help you out.

Andrea: They would be. And so we got some committee openings as well, do we want to talk about some of the committee openings we have? I think there was Natural Resources and something else that I'm-

Kurtis: Is it Enrollment?

Andrea: I think it's Enrollment.

Kurtis: Yeah. So, we went through the regular round of committee openings that usually happens. We appoint new members in February. We do have some openings on the enrollment committee, which is vital committee for the Enrollment Department. They make recommendations to the council on those that are applying for enrollment, as well as providing input on our forms and processes and things like that. And then the other one was Natural Resources, which is also critically important right now. Now that we have our hunting and fishing agreement with the state of Oregon, the committee is very busy with establishing policies and procedures on our end for issuing new licenses and tags and making recommendations for hunting season and fishing seasons. So it's a very busy committee.

Andrea: And those are- because I asked actually, just asked Lisa because they posted the agenda for the Natural Resources Committee meeting. And I was like "is this open for anyone to come? even though I'm not on that? because I just want to learn more. I'm not on the committee, but can I learn more about what Natural Resources is doing?" and it is an open meeting, which is awesome.

Kurtis: Yeah. Every committee that we have, unless they go into executive session, should be open to any Tribal member that wants to attend them. It doesn't mean that the committees will have time set aside for Tribal members to speak or that Tribal members should be showing up to committee meetings and providing input. That's really for the committee members to do. Unless you ask to be put on the agenda to speak or provide some input in terms of that specific committee or that work that they do. But yeah, they're more than open for people to attend and take notes.

Andrea: Listen and learn and gather information, which was my agenda. I was, you know, in my mind I was like, "I don't know what all they do and I'd like to know what they do." So I was just going to sit and listen kind of creepily in the corner.

Kurtis: Well, and they should all have minutes. I'd have to double check, but I think the minutes should be posted to the website in the member area. I'd have to double check on that, but we should be having those minutes available to the membership upon request.

Andrea: I feel like I don't utilize the member area as often as I should, and I don't know if that just becomes naturally to me because I work in public information, but I just- I feel like I never log on as much as I probably should. I'll check that.

Kurtis: Yeah, I probably actually log in there more than I would if I didn't work here, for some reason. I don't know if I'm always looking for a resolution or if those are available on the website on a monthly basis. Or if I have to go follow up "what was that said in that meeting?" And I have to just kind of follow up and look at minutes.

Andrea: To track that down. So we have some holiday closures for our office.

Kurtis: We do. And this will probably be posted after Run to the Rogue. But our offices did close at noon, so that staff could participate on Run to the Rogue. And then we're closed on June 19th for Juneteenth holiday and then closed on July 4th. And we have an all staff meeting July 26th. That's the Friday I think, fourth Friday of July. So.

Andrea: Okay.

Kurtis: Yeah. And we invite all of our area offices to Siletz and we do an all staff training and barbecue for the staff.

Andrea: Just kind of reacquaint ourselves as staff with new staff, which as we know, we just covered, we have a ton of new staff. And then also just, you know, I guess it's just good for us to do to know who's here. And I've emailed people so many times that I didn't meet them until, you know, especially after Covid and I was like "oh, I know what you look like now."

Kurtis: Yeah, it's good to put a face to a name. We also do recognize our employees for the extra effort and projects that they've been working on. Staff get to nominate each other for

awards. So that's a huge part of our staff meeting is recognizing our staff and the hard work they do. Being able to- usually, we have a team that cooks their lunch and so being able to provide a meal and just have a relaxed setting where we can get to know each other and do some teambuilding activities and it's a good day.

Andrea: We have per capita coming up. Can we give some information to our listeners on that one?

Kurtis: Yeah. Per capita is always a big topic every year, we will have more information available to the membership. It should be July 1st. The membership can contact- we have a call in line that's a recording that will tell you the amount and that will be available, again July 1st. And that phone number is (541) 444-8224. We'll also try to post as much information as we can on the member only side of the website. But the deadline for address changes with the enrollment department is July 12th.

Andrea: And that is the cutoff date. If you haven't updated it, then your per cap will get mailed to your previous address.

Kurtis: Yes, it will, yes. And those forms are available on the website address change forms are, I believe, the instructions and process are on there but yeah. You want to get those in as soon as possible.

Andrea: Our next biggest event that's coming up is Culture Camp.

Kurtis: Yes. So Culture Camp we have scheduled on Government Hill, from July 9th through the 11th. It's huge. We anticipate five, six, 700 youth those couple days visiting Siletz. A huge shout out to the Culture and Education departments for hosting that event and putting it on every year. It's not an easy task. And also, we have to do a huge shout out to the staff that participate, because we have a number of staff that volunteer their time to provide stations or some sort of culture activity that they're teaching the youth. So, whether it's baskets or whether it's shawl making, our Natural Resources staff, I think, take youth out to the hatchery.

Andrea: They typically do.

Kurtis: Yeah, so our staff participate. And second, all hands on deck kind of event where anybody that wants to participate on staff can. And we encourage it. but yeah, that's going to be the next huge event July 9th to the 11th. And then after that, we'll be gearing up for a Pow-Wow. Staff are already working on that, putting things in motion. But Pow-Wow this year is August 9th through the 11th, and it will also be on Government Hill.

Andrea: Okay. Don't miss the parade.

Kurtis: The parade, yes. We'll provide some more information on that as we get closer.

Andrea: And we are going to be just wrapping up, the Run to the Rogue.

Kurtis: Yes, our first Run to the Rogue since before Covid. And there's been a lot of buzz and excitement around it. The staff are really excited to participate. I know the elders are really excited to participate. And all of our staff have just been running around trying to prepare for that event, so, this will post after the event is over with. But, hopefully it went very well and hopefully everyone was safe.

Andrea: All right. And I think that that wraps up our episode, unless you have anything that we need to cover that you had that I didn't write down.

Kurtis: Not anything specific that I wanted to cover. Just a reminder that we post official messages to the membership on our official Facebook page. The area offices also have their own individual Facebook pages that you can subscribe to for information specific to your area. And we're constantly updating the website, whether it's the public side or the private side with constant information. We added two new features. One of them will be the RFPs that we often issue for construction projects, contractors/contracted positions is available and active on the links page. So there's a link tab on the website that will list all of this current RFPs. So the other feature that we're adding is a space on our website for all of the policy revisions that we have. The Administrative Procedures Ordinance requires the administration to post and make available for at least 30 days. Any change that we make to policies or ordinances and in order to prevent that from being published in the Siletz newspaper and having that overtaken by policies that we're revising, we're making that available on the website for people to provide comment on, directly to the website. That should be active June 1st. So watch out, there'll be some announcements in the Siletz newspaper regarding the policies that are currently open for comment. So we're excited about that feature. And then we're also going to look at adding a feature for frequently asked questions and being able to have the website be more intuitive and responsive to questions that people have.

Andrea: We have the enrollment policy that is currently open right now, posted on the website. There were some changes within- was it the manual?

Kurtis: I think they've proposed some changes to the death benefit policy. And I believe that's what's currently open for comment for at least 30 days. But we're going to have a series of, policies posted from various departments along with, if you've been following along the last couple of months, the council has been modifying around 4 to 5 ordinances but every other month. So those are based off of recommendations that we've received from an outside contractor on updating ordinances, to make them compliant, to make them to where they don't conflict with each other. And so those will also be available on the website for comment.

Andrea: Okay, on the member side. So we should be definitely encouraging our members to go in and just check all these out. And- I mean, I would assume every single time is for the better.

Kurtis: Yeah, we're not really in the in the business of making stuff more or harder to use, less easy to access. And on another note, the self-sufficiency program right now has their three-year plan 2025 through 2027 available on the website right now for public comment. I encourage everybody to provide input, even if it's good, constructive, we welcome that and we provide that message along to the council and to program staff.

Andrea: Because Tribal Council is here to help us, and they can't help us if we don't tell them.

Kurtis: Yeah. And there's still some departments and programs and services that don't have committees that provide their input to the council. So, the self-sufficiency program and some of the social service programs are those that don't have committees that report directly back to the council. So we welcome the membership directly to provide that input into improving services and access that we then provide that information up to the council.

Andrea: Well, Kurtis, I feel like this was a wonderful conversation and I learned a lot about what we're doing, and I'm pretty sure our listeners will as well.

Kurtis: Great. Thank you for having me again.

Andrea: Thank you for coming on. Have a great day.

Kurtis: You too.