



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Officials meet to discuss closure of Crownpoint Medical Center

WINDOW ROCK – Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) on Monday, met with officials from Navajo Area Indian Health Services, Crownpoint Chapter, Thoreau Chapter, and community members to discuss how to resolve the recent closure of the emergency room, in-patient services, and obstetrics care unit at the Crownpoint Medical Center due to lack of medical personnel.

Delegate Tsosie said community members from Crownpoint and surrounding communities have reached out to their elected officials to raise concerns over the closure and its impact on those who rely on the services provided by the medical center.

“We need to resolve this once and for all. It’s become a life or death situation for the people out there,” said Delegate Tsosie, referencing a previous closure that occurred over two years ago.

Crownpoint Chapter President Rita Capitan said she has received many complaints for years from community members who question the medical center administration’s ability to operate and maintain adequate medical services.

“I’ve heard that it’s due to a housing shortage, but some staff say that’s not true and that it’s the administration,” stated Capitan, who also informed officials that the Crownpoint Chapter approved a resolution calling for Anslem Roanhorse to be reassigned from his current position as the Chief Executive Officer for the Crownpoint Medical Center.

Crownpoint Community Land Use Planning Committee member Leonard Perry, said healthcare services as well as public safety are essential to the projects that CLUP members have been planning for such as a hotel, wellness center, and an Indian market.

Navajo Area IHS director John Hubbard, acknowledged that IHS officials should have communicated more effectively with the public and provided referral information for community members to seek treatment at other facilities, adding that their top priority is now to reopen the emergency room services at the facility as soon as possible.

Hubbard emphasized the challenges in recruiting and maintaining qualified doctors and nurses and said it is a nationwide problem. Additionally, he said many doctors and nurses leave the Navajo Nation for higher paying jobs in cities.

Delegate Tsosie recommended that the officials meet with the Navajo Housing Authority to develop high-quality housing for medical personnel near the medical center in Crownpoint. He also recommended that gas vouchers be provided to community members to travel to other hospitals until the facility reopens completely.

Hubbard said the Crownpoint Medical Center has undergone a formal review process and is awaiting the final report to better understand the areas of need and improvement. He added that the top priority is to reopen the entire facility as soon as possible and also to improve the management of the facility.

Hubbard is tentatively scheduled to provide an update report to the Navajo Nation Council's Naabik'iyáti' Committee on June 25.

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