



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 6, 2015

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
nmlb.communications@gmail.com

Communities begin to heal after closure of Ole Red Barn liquor store

WINDOW ROCK—The Ole Red Barn liquor establishment near the small Navajo community of Nahata Dziil has been closed to the public since Jan. 8, following the denial of transfer of two liquor licenses owned by Gary McDonald, by the Arizona Liquor License Board.

The Renewal of Hope Task Force, a group of local community members who banded together to oppose the liquor establishments, say they have witnessed improvements in their communities since the closure of Ole Red Barn and another nearby liquor business known as Lee's Liquor.

"It has a positive impact on the community and the community is starting a healing process. Community members are being active in cleaning up the liquor bottles and trash in the area," stated Renewal of Hope Task Force member Ina Noggle.

In March 2014, the Navajo Nation Council's Naabik'iyáti' Committee passed a resolution supporting the Renewal of Hope Task Force in opposing the renewal and transfer of the liquor licenses owned by Gary McDonald, who was recently sentenced to a term of one year and three months for felony drug charges.

"Renewal of Hope Task Force members came to the Navajo Nation Council last year seeking support to close the liquor establishments," said Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland). "The Council is proud to say that with the tremendous contributions of community members, we are closer than ever to having Red Barn and Lee's Liquor closed for good."

Although the efforts have been successful to date, executive director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Leonard Gorman pointed out that Arizona liquor laws make it very difficult to shut down a liquor business.

"Throughout the nine month process, it became clear that when a location is approved for liquor sales in Arizona, it is nearly impossible to remove liquor sales from that specific location" said Gorman. "You can take away the liquor licenses from a location, but if the place is pre-approved another liquor license can move in to start business again at the same location."

In January, through the collaboration of the Office of the Speaker and the NNHRC, community members were provided transportation to attend a hearing with the Arizona State Liquor Board in Phoenix to oppose the transfer of the liquor licenses, following an attempt by McDonald to sell the licenses to his close friend George Ryan, prior to his sentencing.

“If the transfer of the liquor licenses had been approved, the stores would still be selling alcohol today,” added Gorman.

Nahat'ahdzil and Sanders community members are now looking at the possibility of bringing new businesses to the area.

“We want a restaurant where families can come together, hay and grain store would also benefit the community.” said Noggle.

“The Commissioners for Nahat’ahdzil Chapter has a plan for a grocery store and laundry mat to be set up by the Dollar Store,” added Hope of Renewal Task Force chairperson Char James.

The liquor establishments owned by McDonald remained closed while the Office of the Speaker and the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission continue to support the Renewal of Hope Task Force in its effort to close the establishments on a permanent basis.

#

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, search for keywords: Navajo Nation Council