



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee approves land withdrawal for Newcomb community cemetery

WINDOW ROCK—The Resources and Development Committee on Tuesday approved Legislation No. 0087-15, the withdrawal of six-acres of Trust Land for use as a cemetery in the community of Newcomb, located approximately 36-miles south of Shiprock.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), who represents the Newcomb Chapter and sponsored the legislation, said the process began in August 2013 when the chapter passed a resolution supporting the establishment of the community cemetery.

“The chapter is undertaking this initiative and they have gone through the entire process and all the requirements to withdraw the land have been met,” stated Speaker Bates.

Newcomb Chapter president David Randolph, Sr. explained that the land has existing graves, but establishing the cemetery would also allow the chapter to assume other responsibilities such as repairs, clean-up, and maintenance tasks.

The cemetery would be divided into two sections, one for the community plot and the other would be reserved for veterans, added Randolph.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said he supports the establishment of the cemetery while raising several concerns over high burial costs, lack of cemeteries, and chapters that require higher fees for non-chapter members.

“Some chapters are requiring non-chapter members to pay additional fees to bury people,” said Delegate Tsosie. “This is Navajo land and they should be able to be buried anywhere.”

Delegate Tsosie also recommended that the Nation adopt a cemetery policy and pointed out that many low-income families struggle to pay the high costs to mortuaries for funeral services.

“Poor families have to pawn everything in order to bury their loved ones,” added Delegate Tsosie.

RDC members said they supported the establishment of the cemetery, saying it is a way of offsetting potential problems due to the growing number of burial plots in undesignated areas.

According to the Newcomb Chapter’s plan of operation, burial fees will be \$25 per interment which will then be used for maintenance, repairs, and operating costs by the certified chapter.

The chapter will also be responsible for weed removal, fencing and gates, signage, maintaining paths, and establishing a gravel road to the cemetery.

The Newcomb Community and Veterans Cemetery will be located approximately 1.5 miles northwest of the Newcomb Chapter house.

The Resources and Development Committee is the final authority for the legislation.

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