



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee receives report from Eastern Navajo Land Board regarding FY2016 budget

WINDOW ROCK – The Budget and Finance Committee received a report on Tuesday regarding the FY2016 budget for the Eastern Navajo Land Board, who claimed their budget was cut approximately 48 percent from their previous budget.

According to the report, ENLB member Emory Chee said that the reduced budget came with no explanation and said he felt that the board could be in the process of being dismantled. Chee said the budget was cut by approximately \$117,000 and hoped to reclaim the difference.

“We are elected officials and we take oaths to maintain and protect the laws of the Navajo Nation. The ENLB represents three chapters: Bááháálí, Red Rock, and Churchrock. We do more work, and we were cut the most,” said Chee.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said he reviewed the ENLB budget and found that in FY2015 their budget had been approved for \$274,000, and for FY2016 approximately \$140,000 was approved.

However, Delegate Damon said he looked further into the ENLB’s past budget allocations and found that their budget was not cut, and that in fact their budget was reduced to its original amount.

“After further reviewing your past budgets, you were allocated about \$140,000 in FY2013 and FY2014, however in FY2015, you budget increased to \$274,000 because it would cover mileage, office supplies, and other travel expenses for your land conservation plans during 2015,” said Delegate Damon. “You didn’t get cut, instead you were returned to your original budget.”

Delegate Damon explained to BFC members that in 2015, the ENLB and Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture were to develop land conservation plans between land permit holders in the Eastern Navajo Agency and the Bureau of Indian Affairs through data collection, which would aid in the planning process.

NNDOA program manager Leo Watchman said the board has not completed the conservation plans and would need additional time and funding to complete the project.

BFC vice chair Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) suggested to the board that they submit a request for funding from the \$2.5 million carryover that was recently approved within the Comprehensive Budget for the Executive Branch, which the NNDOA is under.

BFC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

After the meeting, Delegate Damon sent a request for a work session with the Resources and Development Committee, ENLB, BIA, and the NNDOA to address the budget issues. He added that if the Office of the President and Vice President were not able to provide funding from the carryover, the BFC would develop legislation for supplemental funding to aid the ENLB to complete the conservation plans.

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