



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Council approves the Síhasin Fund Twin Arrows police and fire station sub-station expenditure plan**

**WINDOW ROCK** – During the third day of the 2016 Spring Council Session, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Navajo Nation Council approved the Síhasin Fund Twin Arrows police and fire station economic/community expenditure plan. The adoption approves the appropriation and expenditure of funds from the Síhasin Fund principal in the amount of \$4.5 million for the construction of a police and fire sub-station at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort – located 24 miles east of Flagstaff, Ariz.

According to Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), who sponsored the legislation, the funding would address the need for public safety at the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort.

“A police and fire sub-station is highly needed at Twin Arrows to address public safety and medical emergencies. Twin Arrows will continue to flourish with housing opportunities, convenient stores, and other enterprise development. Thus, we need to be prepared for all public safety emergencies with the growing development,” state Delegate Damon.

According to the executive director of compliance for the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise Michelle Dotson, the public safety building is shovel ready with all environmental, archeology, and biological clearances completed.

“The public safety facility has been ready for construction since the Twin Arrows was completed and all we need is funding to complete the project. This is the fourth attempt to seek project funding because it failed to be included in the Capital Improvement Plan and the Navajo Nation Permanent Fund Income Five Year Expenditure Plan, and a failed attempt to request funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance,” stated Dotson.

The proposed 15,000 square-foot facility would be located near the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort, consisting of a 911 dispatch room, three bay garage for fire trucks, sleeping quarters for men and women, fire, medical, and police administrative offices, and training rooms.

The Síhasin Fund principal funds are from the \$554 million settlement from the federal government and is managed and invested to provide financial support and/or financing for the planning and development of regional infrastructure supporting economic and community development, including housing, and/or education opportunities for members of the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) questioned why the grant request is on behalf of NNGE instead of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety.

“The legislation is for NNGE, not DPS. I believe that this legislation is only promoting to continue the gaming industry. Will NNGE pay for all operation and maintenance costs of the public safety facility?” questioned Delegate Tsosie.

Dotson explained that after construction is completed, NNGE will transfer all ownership and title of the fire and police sub-station to the Navajo Nation and operated by DPS, as outlined in the legislation. Also, NNGE would continue to cost share when additional operation and maintenance funds are needed.

According to the agreement between NNGE and DPS, the police, fire, and medical services will also serve the surrounding remote communities of Twin Arrows.

Law and Order Committee chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) expressed his support of the legislation to provide public safety services for the casino and surrounding communities.

“The project is one of DPS’s priority goals. We should have public safety services at all of our casinos to avoid any tragic incidents. We need to be prepared at all times,” stated Delegate Yazzie.

Council members voted 19-3 to pass Legislation No. 0114-16 with two failed amendments, which required two-thirds of Council’s approval. President Russell Begaye will have ten calendar days to consider the legislation once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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