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Law and Order Committee and Health, Education, and Human Services Committee discusses the Chief of Police vacancy

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee and the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee held a joint work session regarding the longstanding vacancy of the Chief of Police position for the Navajo Nation.

According to the Navajo Department of Personnel Management, the Chief of Police position has been vacant since 2008.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) stated that hiring a Chief of Police is one of the four top priorities that the LOC is addressing for the Navajo Division of Public Safety.

"Increasing the salary for police officers, creating a better retirement benefit package for DPS, acknowledging the fleet management issue with DPS, and immediately hiring a Chief of Police are LOC's priorities for DPS," stated Delegate Begay, "The need for a Chief of Police is crucial to addressing all DPS issues."

According to the Acting Chief of Police Bobby Etcitty, the position has not been filled because applicants do not meet the minimum qualifications. Potential applicants also seek additional benefits such as higher salary, housing, and per diem but those accommodations cannot be met because it is not within DPS policy, stated Mr. Etcitty.

The Chief of Police job vacancy announcement outlines the following qualifications:

- Minimum Qualifications: A bachelor's degree in police science, law enforcement, criminal
 justice, public administration or closely related field; and eight years management
 experience in law enforcement, six years of which must have been as a police captain or
 higher rank.
- 2. Preferred Qualifications: A master's degree in police science, law enforcement, criminal justice, public administration or closely related field; six years management experience in law enforcement, four years of which must have been as a police captain or higher rank.
- 3. Special Requirements: Must be commissioned by Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah Peace Officer Standards and Training, show a favorable background investigation, possess a valid driver's license, CPR certification, first aid certification, firearms certification, general

instructor's certification, and successfully completed a physical, psychological, promotional testing.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) recommended that perhaps the qualifications could be modified by DPM and DPS.

LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) recommended DPM and DPS to have a meeting to carefully analyze the minimum qualifications and to resolve the issues.

"I think the issue is communication between DPM and DPS. Both programs need to come together and find solutions and create recommendations to make the hiring process effective," stated Delegate Tso.

DPM Human Resource Classification and Pay Manager Reycita Toddy stated, "Changing the qualification is possible. DPS can lower the minimum qualifications by changing the education from bachelor's degree to associates degree. We would need recommendations from the DPS Director Jesse Delmar. However, the salary will change if qualifications are modified."

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. opposed lowering the minimum qualifications.

"I do not support changing the qualifications. We shouldn't lower the standards of the highest DPS position. We need a highly qualified Chief of Police because we have to address many public safety issues at the state and federal level. Having a Chief of Police with an associates degree would not fit the duties and responsibilities criteria," stated Delegate Begay.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) directed DPS and DPM to give an updated report on possible recommendations during the next regular LOC meeting on April 11.

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